The Call of the Flute

(Venu Gita)

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Published by:
Pratham Peeth Publication
and
International Pushtimargiya Vaishnava Parishad (U.K.)
2005

Copies: 1000

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International Pushtimargiya Vaishnava Parishad

Printed by:
Shri Harinam Press, Loi Bazar, Vrindaban-281121

Table of Contents

	Introduction	1
1.	Krishna Arrives	7
2.	The Lord of Sweetness	13
3.	The Flute's Call	19
4.	Bewildered	23
5.	Actor-Husband	27
6.	The Second Call	39
7.	The Ultimate Reward	45
8.	Krishna Ras	51
9.	The Bamboo Flute	57
10.	Lotus Feet	63
11.	The Deer	69
12.	The Apsaras	77
13.	The Cows	81
14.	The Birds	85
15.	The Waters	89
16.	The Cloud	93
17.	The Pulindis	97
18.	Govardhan	101
19.	Krishna	105
20.	Perfect Attachment	109
	श्रीवेणु–गीत	113

Introduction

"I was One and decided to become many."
(Upanisad)

I belong, along with you, to the many. The One's relationship to the many, especially mine, has brought me to His Flute's Call. It is about the ways the One relates to His many. It specifically deals with the exhibitions of Shri Krishna, the All-Attractive and True One. His Flute's Call is about all the ways He affects His chosen many.

I have always identified with expressive insights that align with personal experience. They are milestones along the path of devotion and indicate positions on the way to a destination within a circular pilgrimage. These teachings address my individual spiritual interests and with the help of Shri Vallabhacharya's followers and lineage-holders, I undertook the translation and interpretation of this text.

I believe the reward is the means as well as the fruit, a perfect process, but I still distinguish the different tastes. I believe in *Brahman*, that All Beings can balance contradictions and that He is Personal and everywhere. He breaks the overused "All is One" mold with His joyous expansion.

The Svaminis, the main speakers of this text are simple dairy-maids. They are also called Gopis and have been chosen to be Krishna-Affected. They are the gurus of Devotion and can even affect Him. When Krishna sees his Beloved Radha's moon-like

face, an ocean of bliss swells within Him. The nectar overflows into Vrindavan, the *lila* land, God's Playground, the location of this song.

I look for those special places where the One and the many intermingle and manifest *lila*. *Lila* is intense, yet effortless. It is delightful and sublime, ever-increasing in bliss, instructive, yet playful. In *lila*, solids become fluid and time is uninterrupted. *Lila* makes trees feel, water conscious, and deer appear with knowledge-laced eyes. *Lila* is replete with perfect response and *lila* is a collection of *ras*, the nectar experience. Even today, the Vrindavan area, the site of His Flute's Call is distinguished because of its *lila* connections.

Krishna is full of *ras*, its personified form. Everything He does and wears produces one delightful *ras* after another. When His *ras* is assimilated there is an experience of *bhava*, a devotional state of Bliss-Being. Beings blessed with *bhava* I emulate with humility. They are thrilled and always In Love. The most Brilliant Lovers are the Svaminis; the Gopis are the *bhava-gurus*, they adore God. What they say in His Flute's Call is important to us now.

I have bathed in the Yamuna river and walked the Vrindavan region looking for their *bhava*. It is a good occupation. I approach *bhava* as an American-born translator and long-time India pilgrim. The text I present here, the *Venu Gita*, is found in the *Shrimad Bhagavat*. It arises, jewel-like, in the eighteenth chapter of the tenth canto, Shri Krishna's very heart. It depicts a magical portion of His *lila*, His ever-increasing joyful play, His Flute's Call.

I have also used Shri Vallabhacharya's commentary on the *lila*, the *Shri Subodhini*, a highly insightful text that brings forth not only beautiful intelligence, but the *lila*-psychology of the Svaminis, the recipients of the Call. From the *Shri Subodhini* text, I have combined the meanings of the Sanskrit words along with their *bhavas*, their devotional states and significants.

Shri Vallabhacharya's *Subodhiniji* is an exposition of Shri Svaminiji's (Shri Radha) devotional state. It is believed to contain his most important teachings. Shri Vallabhacharya refused to leave this world, although ordered by Shri Krishna, until the

Bhakti Master had finished his *Subodhini* commentary on the tenth canto of the *Shrimad Bhagavat*. The *Shri Subdohini* explains the *Bhagavat* in terms of its letters, words, and sentences. To bring this text from *samadhi* sanskrit language into English and maintain the same poignant *samadhi* style is an impossible task. The English language simply can not parallel this type of expression. Therefore, as a translator, I have taken the liberty of expanding the text in order to transfer its meaning in a comprehensible and flowing manner. Any flaws in this transmission are purely my own.

His Flute's Call is essentially about Being Exhilarated. Where there is *bhava* there is the experience of nectar. It confers not only immortality, but many pleasantries along the way. The development of *bhava*, what makes it arises and flourish and the pure aesthetic raptures that ensue in the process of *bhakti* is what the true tale is all about.

Krishna is a dancer, a player, an actor, a husband, a cowherder, a friend, a Lover as well as a Flute Player. He is an expert in *abhinaya*, that is, in exhibiting the meaning of what He depicts. He is so good that anyone who has any purely aesthetic contact with Him or His *lila*-drama has an unforgettable experience. Love, attachment and obsession are the devotional results.

The South Indian dancer, Lakshmi Visavanathan explains this in terms of dance. "She uses her body, her limbs, hands, face and eyes to reach out to her viewers. A mere look is enough to establish a single strong emotion. She communicates to the viewer and makes him/her forget himself, and allows him/her to partake in the *ras*; pure aesthetic rapture. Is it any wonder then that pandits recognize the relishing of *ras* as a spiritual experience?"

Krishna and His worship is Pure Drama: *lila*. He plays and directs at the same time, all for an Awakening in those whose time has come. The singers have various constitutions yet share the common virtue of Krishna Attachment. Their hearts are fired by His melody and contain the rush of Shri Krishna's *ras*. It is all consummated in Vrindavan, where Krishna plays His flute.

When you know someone who knows something that you want to know, you can quickly get to know it. If it is conscious, it is *satsang*, the pure association. The Svamini's story is an unfoldment of *bhava*. I tell their story to find and refine my own *bhava*. Vrindavan is anywhere that there is *bhava*.

The Svamini's passion for Shri Krishna is not openly enacted, yet commands the stage of Vrindaban. To understand the nature of their loving exchanges is to understand Shri Krishna. He awakens divinity with His presence, the direct method. His world is a perfect place, comprised of only Godliness and love-plays.

It is Shri Krishna's sheer confidence that allows Him to establish Overwhelming Attachment to Himself in whoever He chooses. In Vrindavan everything is a combination of Him. Even trees and animals fall under His spell; they become enlightened. In Vrindavan everything manifests for the blissful purpose of *lila*. Krishna sounds His flute to announce the awakening.

Krishna is proficient in appearing and appealing to the bhakta's nature according to her individual temperament. Because it is too difficult to climb out of the world, Shri Krishna comes here and makes it divine. *Lila* makes Krishna comprehensible. The Svaminis' song about His flute arose because of the distance and proximity they felt to and from their Beloved. Their longings allowed them entrance onto the stage, but first He gave them understanding of His formless aspect. Then came His form full of nectar enjoyment. Without Love's Wisdom you simply cannot enjoy.

Without the Svaminis' insight into the delicate nature of Krishna's play, it would be exceedingly difficult to comprehend the character of *lila*. Entrance into *lila* is established by Krishna Himself and never through effort. "He is achieved by those He chooses." In this *lila*, any means that is undertaken achieves accomplishment due to God's total interference with the process.

Krishna liberates anyone who directs herself towards Him, regardless of attitude. Shri Vallabhacharya adds, "The attainment of Shri Krishna can never be dependent upon any practice. Krishna, who is perfect *bhava*, is attained through the precise emulation of those who have already attained Him."

The Svaminis who are established physically in their homes are gazing toward His plays in the forest and are undergoing a process of absorption. As they remember and behold the Beloved, their experience of divinity rises from the level of emulation to direct experience. Their transformation occurred after hearing Shri Krishna's flute. They understand the difference between the material and spiritual and proclaim with full confidence that to engage with God using every one of our senses is the ultimate fruit. Then the many enjoy the One.

Shyamdas
Gokul
March 15, 1999

1

Krishna Arrives

It is autumn in Vrindavan.
The waters are pure and abundant
From the recent rains.
The fragrance of the lotus flowers mingles
With the wind.
Shri Krishna, the immortal One
Enters the forest havens with
His cows and cowlads.
(Bhagavat 10/18/1)

SUBODHINI

Here in the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavata we find an eloquent description of the Svaminis, the blessed dairy-maids of Vrindavan. Their affinity for and attraction to Krishna is revealed by the way they describe Vrindavan as well as what they describe therein.

To awaken their divine attachment
Hari entered Vrindavan playing His flute.
The Svaminis sang about the song of His flute.
Whoever is attracted to His attributes
Ends up attached to Him.

Before there is attachment, however, love must arise and only Hari can cause this awakening. The Svaminis' awakening occurred after their experiences of renunciation, knowledge, yoga, austerity and devotion.

The Svamini's renunciation did not embrace any negations of the world. It was spontaneous and totally derived from their unflinching love and devotion to Shri Krishna. It was through their all-encompassing love that any other attachments were naturally shed without a trace of resentment.

Next came knowledge. Knowledge for these blessed women of Braja appeared when they had the intuitive and direct experience of Shri Krishna's *lila* form.

The next realization was of Yoga. For the Gopis, Yoga was not a meditative exercise, but a one-pointed yoking of their hearts and minds directly to Shri Krishna. It was not based upon any practice, but upon Krishna.

Their *tapa* or austerities were perfected when they experienced Shri Krishna's separation. Separation for the blessed residents of Vrindavan is a result of their direct contact with *Brahman*.

Separation is Krishna in the heart.
Union is Krishna in the world.

Union and Separation are the two sides of the single petal of Love. The *lila*-process that Shri Krishna initiated with the second call of His flute culminated with the Svamini's entrance into Bhakti, devotion to Shri Krishna. Upon achieving that devotional realization, they naturally renounced all other pursuits including the desire for liberation or enlightenment.

What was there to be liberated from?
Krishna became everything.
What enlightenment could be chased after
When the Lord of enlightenment was chasing after them!

This five-fold realization was attained through their careful absorption of the message that was carried through the song of Shri Krishna's flute. Only after having fully imbibed its essence were the Svaminis able to sing His praises. Since these five insights were not present when they first heard the call of His flute, at that time they were unable to truly glorify Him.

Hari is beyond time. He is Purushottam, God Himself and in this song of the flute He performs thirteen types of *lila*s of which the Svaminis sing. This wonderful awakening of the appropriate *lila* mood of attachment could only be accomplished by Krishna Himself.

He is also the Highest One and is beyond the realm of time. The thirteen voices that tell of His amazing tale reveal His transcendence of time. The number thirteen itself conveys this transcendental state. The mundane day is split into two twelve hour periods and the number thirteen transcends twelve and shows that His *lila* is not governed by the laws of time.

He is not only beyond time, but is unlike any other man. This is also demonstrated by the number thirteen, for man is considered to be of twelve limbs and Krishna surpasses all limitations of the twelve-limbed being by accepting the thirteen types of Svaminis revealed in this song.

The glories of autumn were sung of previously. Now to continue that *lila* Shri Krishna enters the forests of Vrindavan. The monsoon has passed, the autumn season has arrived and the lakes and ponds are filled with fresh water. Krishna is associating, as He always does, with the blessed women of Braja, the Svaminis.

They are His divine powers,
His *shaktis*.
They abide in the glades of Vrindavan
For His sheer enjoyment.

Shri Krishna is the ultimate hero and pleases all of the Svaminis. He never loses His appetite for love. The Svaminis who sport with Him are His *shaktis;* they are His female powers, Vrindavan Devis. To enter the spirit of Vrindavan , they must never be considered as mundane women, but as beings whose positions are rich in enlightenment.

Their love is to be emulated.

Krishna's cowlad friends who join Him in the forest to herd cows are not only His companions, but His bhakta devotees. They have comprehended truth and can now follow God. These friends of Shri Krishna are spiritually qualified to have the *darshan* of Vrindavan.

In order for Shri Krishna's *shaktis*, the Svaminis, to have amorous exchange with Shri Krishna, the environment must be free of fear or concern. Any contrary condition would conflict with Shri Krishna's plan for *bhava*, the perfect devotional mood. For nectar to appear, the surroundings must be supportive.

Krishna's friends not only witness the lila,
They are also the protective deities of Vrindavan.
Their presence ensures the perfection of the lila
So nothing contrary to the ideal mood can infiltrate.

The Svamini's fearless dalliance with Shri Krishna occurs on the lands and in the waters of Vrindavan. For this auspicious occasion, the earth is made fragrant by gentle cool breezes that have passed over blooming lotuses. The lotus petals are in water, yet they remain dry. They are engaged in *lila*-service and are like the sage's mind: they remain in the world, yet are focused upon *Brahman*. The Svaminis' exchanges with Shri Krishna are staged around the clear autumn waters that have collected in the various tanks and lakes in Vrindavan. Krishna is fond of His water *lila*s in the Yamuna river.

The reason for all these pleasantries is for the Play of Love which requires a comfortable setting. To this end, Shri Krishna makes the necessary arrangements.

Gentle, cool and fragrant breezes
Promote the divine erotic mood.

To sport in the waters, the lakes and ponds must be clear and just the right temperature.The Vrindavan autumn naturally affords all of these requirements. The season is perfect for Krishna-*lila*.

Observe the multi-level entrance into Vrindavan. In the outer forests Krishna herds His cows who are also privy to the nature of His *lila*. He is escorted by the cowlads who sing the praises of the Immortal Hari. Just beyond those havens, unseen to all but His most intimate associates, are the secluded *lila*-bowers. There He frolics with the Svaminis, abashing the beauty of countless loves.

The blessed women of Braja sing about the effects of Shri Krishna's flute from the privacy of their homes. They speak of the intimacy of the *lila*-bower and explain to us what happens there. But at present, the emphasis is upon the attributes of the celestial forest. We are being primed. The description of Vrindavan's pure waters and blooming lotuses enlightens us to the true nature of Vrindavan.

The singers of this song behold Shri Krishna
As He enters the blissful, fragrant forest.
They understand *lila*-activity and see His entrance,
Knowing it is into the eternal abode called Vrindavan.

2

The Lord of Sweetness

Shri Krishna is the Lord of sweetness.
With brother Balaram and cowlad friends
He plays His flute and herds the cows
Through the Vrindavan forests
That play host to lakes,
The Yamuna river and gentle hills.

The glades there are enjoyed
By flocks of birds and swarms of black bees,
All intoxicated by the rows of blossoming
Trees and vines.
(Bhagavat 18/10/2)

SUBODHINI

Krishna enters this magical forest and awakens the divinities who reside there. He accomplishes this through the call of His flute. He has opened the gates of love and the blessed women of Braja who are swept away in a current of *bhava*, play with Hari. This takes place very close to their homes. The lakes of Braja, the Yamuna river and the adjoining hillsides are all abodes of *lila*-dalliance.

Krishna is the Lord of Spring,
The supreme season of love.
Hari is comprised of nectar,
His *bhava* supports the conjugal exchange.

He is ready and prepares others. Hari is Love's personified form. The Svaminis nourish that love and inspire it to arise. Shri Krishna is the basis of their *lila*-mood and the Svaminis' *bhava* for Krishna is Krishna Himself.

The Svaminis' *bhava* is not based upon some vague memory. It continually evolves from their ecstatic beings that are joined with Krishna. For those elevated bhaktas, Hari is blissful. His form is comprised of *Brahman*'s intimate gesture. All portions of His body, including every hair and even the slightest movement, express the perfection of His own bliss.

Shri Krishna is the Lord of Spring. He is Love's most divine manifestation. He awakens that state in the divinities of Braja through the call of His flute. Even the trees and vines are completely taken with Hari's expressions and now reflect the joy of the Svaminis.

They bloom with blissful consciousness!

Krishna appears to be a herder of cows. His power of action enters His cowlads and enables them to herd cows through the realm of Vrindavan. Krishna's power of knowledge manifests in His brother Balaram. Balaram is the protector of the *lila*. Without knowledge of Balaram's spiritual form, the unmanifested *Akshara Brahman*, *lila* would have no foundation. He removes obstructions to *lila* by killing demons that appear like mayic curtains prohibiting the blessed ones from *lila* entrance.

This is a description of *lila*.
Teachings of this nature are used
To visualize and develop *bhava*,
The Devotional Experience.

Shri Krishna sets everything in place and then on the pretext of going to the forest with His cows and friends, He meets with the Svaminis for uninhibited *lila*.

What is profound does not appear before all.
This *lila* is not openly revealed
Because *ras* only flourishes in concealment.

Most men and women see young Krishna going to the forest to herd while another profound *lila* continues with the Gopis in the deeper bowers. The majority see Krishna as Gopal, the one who takes care of the cows, but Gopal is also the nourisher of the senses.

The Svaminis are intimate with Gopal.
And experience Him through every door of perception.

Krishna honors their realization through *lila*. As Gopal, the nourisher of divine senses, He daily proceeds to the intimate glades where He delights the blessed ones as the Lord of Love. For the protection of *lila*, He conceals Himself from the unqualified ones.

Krishna awakens the amorous mood. It is exalted because it contains the moods of peace, friendship, servitude, parental affection and intimate passion. He awakens Vrindavan with the call of His flute. His conjugal exchange as the Srutis say is:

"Always joined and replete
With enlightened knowledge and action."

Without the maturing of the powers of knowledge and action, the *lila*-mood could never arise. Krishna is truly, "All knowing and all powerful". When He manifests as Vedas, His two aspects of knowledge and action are apparent. Vrindavan shines with the presence of these dual powers in personified form.

It is spring, the king of seasons.
Perfect and all-containing.

Hari appears in Vrindavan with His retinue of agreeable weather and blossoming trees and vines. Spring is also the lord of love and escorts all that is necessary for the mood of spiritual passion to arise. He welcomes the qualified to enter the love-games.

Shri Krishna's *lila* endures with vitality on the Govardhan Hill, by the Yamuna river and in the lakes and ponds around Vrindavan. Birds and bees are intoxicated by rows of blossoming trees and vines. All these things ignite the *lila*-mood and promote perception of the blissful swarthy-colored *Brahman*. Peacocks, parrots, swans and other birds engage in diverse *lila-seva* around the hills and waters of Braja.

The call of Shri Krishna's flute
Kindles in those women
Who live around the hills and waters of Braja
The spiritual conjugal mood.
The forest awakens with
Profuse Krishna *bhava*.

The flute arouses love, but not perception of Krishna's form. This will happen later. For now, the call promotes love and attachment in the depths of the Svamini's beings. Those who sing the song of Krishna's flute are sitting in their homes. They have fallen under the spell of desire for Krishna. Now they will sing of their *bhava* in the company of others of similar initiation.

3

The Flute's Call

The blessed women of Braja
Heard Shri Krishna's flute.
It created a surge of desire in them.
Some of them who were not directly before Krishna
Began to sing of His praises
In the company of other Svaminis.
(Bhagavat 10/18/3)

SUBODHINI

The call of the flute spiritually awakens the Svaminis and creates a desire to make dalliance with Shri Krishna. Under the spell of that great longing, they speak and sing of Shri Krishna in the company of others who are also addicted to *lila*.

Shri Krishna never does anything without a specific plan. He sounds the flute for the explicit purpose of arousing, within the Svaminis, a desire to sport with Him. The song of the flute is divine and through its call Shri Krishna is able to enter their hearts. The blessed women of the village, as well as the women of the forest, are no longer interested in listening to anything else; not even to the words of the righteous scriptures.

The song is spiritual, otherwise how could the Gopis, who are in their homes and out of the normal hearing range of anyone playing a flute in a distant forest, hear?

The melody creates spontaneous praise
That flows from their hearts with great intensity.

Their love for the Beloved was already firmly established and the call made it arise into their world. They could hear it because they were spiritually qualified. The Blessed Lord allowed them eligibility and now they experience His call as non-different from His form.

There are others who are nearby but cannot hear.
Lila is replete with purpose and Krishna
Awakens only those whose time has come.
Others simply will not respond to His calling.

This all occurs because of the unique constitution of Krishna's scheme. The Director carefully stages the parts. For

the love plays to begin, there has to be an awakening, an arousal within those who are prepared. Souls with no *lila*-inclination remain unmoved. If the unqualified, who lack the necessary spiritual preparations, were to suddenly become enamored with Krishna's call, their participation would be spiritually unbalanced. Divine experiences are always timely. Krishna's call penetrates the ready hearts of the Svaminis.

It is a *Lila*-Invitation.

His melody creates a stir throughout the forest and awakens all the gods. The intensity of the amorous mood that surges within the Svamini's souls

Is Overwhelming.

Unable to contain the force of Hari's flow of love, many of the Gopis have become senseless. The ones Krishna graced can contain the call of the flute within their hearts. They receive and praise Him in the company of other Svaminis who are also consciously attached to Him.

Because desires are not obstructed
They can clearly remember
Krishna's various expressions.

They recollect Krishna and discern His divine form through all of their senses. The other unconscious Svaminis will first have to overcome the swell of desire and then fathom a way to contain His blissful form. This will all be accomplished when Shri Krishna appears before them:

Krishna is adorned and establishes in the Svaminis
The power and knowledge necessary to contain Him.
Then He will become dependent on them.

In this amazing process He awards them the capacity to

embrace both union and separation. In union He is seen in one place and in separation, everywhere. Until that capacity arises many of the Svaminis will remain bewildered.

Now, the speaker of the *Shrimad Bhagavat*a, Shri Sukadeva will tell King Parikshit about the Svaminis' enlightenment. King Parikshit is sitting at the feet of the sage Sukadeva. The King has only two more days to live and within that time he needs to attain liberation. Receiving teachings from Sukadevaji is the king's only possibility.

King Parikshit's life had changed entirely when he arrived one hot summer day at an ashram and requested a glass of water from a meditating sage. The holy man, completely absorbed in meditation, did not hear the king's request. The king, not realizing the sage's spiritual accomplishments, falsely sensed that the sage was ignoring him. Feeling slighted, the king threw a dead snake around the sage and angrily left the ashram.

When the sage's son returned to the hermitage and found his father with a dead snake around his neck, he immediately knew what the king had done. He took revenge by putting a curse on King Parikshit: he would die of a snake bite in seven days. Meanwhile, the king realizing his folly and that he was cursed, renounced everything and set his mind on attaining liberation.

After seeking the counsel of many holy men, Shri Sukadeva appeared before the King. Shri Sukadeva, a being who was liberated from birth, offered the ultimate teaching; for the remaining seven days the king should listen to the *Shrimad Bhagavatam*. The sage assured him that upon its completion, he would attain liberation. The king had been sitting in one posture, without drinking or eating for five days. Shri Sukadeva begins to explain Shri Krishna's flute playing and the effects it had upon Vrindavan.

4

Bewildered

"O king, the Gopis then began to praise
Shri Krishna,
But when they remembered His activities,
The swell of love bewildered their minds
To such an extent that they were
Unable to continue their song."
(Bhagavat 10/18/4)

SUBODHINI

Each expression of the Svaminis is part of a *lila* progression that culminates in their being able to freely praise Krishna and enter into His *lila*. Now they are unable to praise their experience of Shri Krishna's form and His flute playing.

They can no longer sing of the divine activity,
Its cause nor the reward.

They are unable to contain the flow of their own desires awakened by Shri Krishna's remembrance. They are bewildered. It is only in the next act that Shri Krishna is able to restrain their flood of desire by appearing to them through the avenue of sound. It enters their ears and then their hearts.

Only when Shri Krishna enriches their devotion with insight are they able to clearly hear, comprehend and sing of His glories. Then they will experience Krishna as non-different from His call. The Gopis reflect upon how Krishna's flute effects them, and explain the divine reaction that the call had upon all of Vrindavan.

It causes rivers to stop flowing and puts even the birds into a state of profound contemplation. The cause of this great pleasure is Shri Krishna Himself.

The Svaminis know of no greater reward for those
Endowed with eyes, than to behold Krishna and Balaram
Playing their flutes and herding cows.

Krishna's bliss form blesses His favored flute; its sound evokes spiritual distress in the Svaminis. They are jealous of that flute. It imbibes the nectar of Shri Krishna's lips and whatever is left over it passes to the trees that have all become blissful and

start to exude nectar. The Svamini's reward is to have the direct experience of Shri Krishna as He returns home from his day of wandering the forests with the cows.

This *lila* was originally told to a king, a ruler of men, established in dharma who had controlled his senses. Although he insulted a sage, he was able to attain liberation through realizing the meaning of Sukadeva's discourse.

Because the Svaminis of Vrindavan were unable to express in word or song the glory of their beloved Hari due to the force of His overwhelming love, Shri Shukadevaji, the enlightened narrator, revealed the *lilas* of their hearts to the attentive King Parikshit. He speaks of Krishna's entrance into Vrindavan. Hari's movement and attire contain many meanings, as Sukadevaji now explains.

5

Actor-Husband

"Krishna is adorned with a peacock feather and
His ears are graced with flowers,
Krishna's clothes are the color of bright gold.
He wears a Vaiyanti forest garland
And appears as the Actor-Husband.
He is the Svaminis choice,
Their Lord and husband.

He fills the holes of His flute
With the nectar from His lips.
The song of His praise sounds
As He enters Vrindavan
Surrounded by His cowlad friends.
His lotus feet appear splendid
And create dalliance wherever
They touch the ground."
(Bhagavat 10/18/5)

SUBODHINI

Shri Sukadeva uses words to describe this *lila*. The Svaminis are too spellbound by Krishna's charm to describe, at this point, what they have experienced, so Shri Sukadevaji steps in and speaks of:

Krishna's form,
The sound of His magic flute
As well as the nature of Hari's lila
As He enters Vrindavan.

When Krishna's form, music and *lila* mingle, something incredible happens. Although beyond words, speech is now used to describe the *lila;*

Hari has taken on a body.
He fills the holes of His flute
With His essence, His breath.
His passage into Vrindavan
Is with a body and it is
Embellished with attributes.
Perfect Brahman is sporting, making *lila*.

Now Krishna is dancing like a peacock because peacocks dance when they are filled with nectar, when they are thrilled. Since Hari is ecstatic with His own *lila*, He becomes a peacock-dancer.

He is indicating to His bhaktas that He is comprised of pure bliss. Everything about Krishna reflects in different ways the nectarous aspect of His being. Krishna is the perfect *ras*, sheer nectar, its manifest form. He has allowed the Swaminis of Braja a glimpse of His glory, a taste of the priceless elixir, but they

have become powerless and remain in a state of total awe. As they are speechless, Sukadevaji begins to explain how Krishna appears as the greatest actor:

Krishna is the best, the chosen One, the Husband.
Krishna is two-fold as is His loving nectar.

The mood of love embraces both union and separation. The movement between union and separation with the Lover supports, nourishes and heightens the *ras*.

Understand the petal of separation by relating to the well-known experience of drama. When you watch a play, you are a witness. You have no direct physical involvement with the actors. The gestures of the actor create a response in you. Everything is observed and then processed internally. The experience of drama is distinct. What we mean by separation can be understood through the example of drama.

Good drama creates an intense inner feeling.
It is isolated, one pointed, a meditation
Where you forget everything else
Except the performance.

When Sukadeva calls Krishna an "actor", he is referring to the divine condition of separation. He is speaking about the Svaminis' inner experience of Shri Krishna. *Viprayoga* can be translated as separation, but the meaning is really more extensive. Separation is not dependent on manifest reality.

It is felt and created within.
Supremely blissful, it can be
Experienced everywhere
With great passion and does not require
Any physical contact.

When Krishna is an actor, there is separation, when He is the husband, there is union. Krishna is *natvar*, "the Actor-

Husband". In union, Krishna is in one place and in separation He is found everywhere.

Now understand Krishna's nectar-like union. In the blessed state of union, He is the best husband, He is the supreme choice.

In union He appears in the world.
The Svaminis behold Him with their senses.
He becomes their Lord of enjoyment.

Then everything is arranged in the world for the delightful occasion of union-*lila*.

In union Hari is apparent.
His lila of love
Is rich with outer form.
He emanates it within the world
With all the necessary divine ingredients and partners.

The *ras* of union and separation forever resides within Hari, the master of ceremonies, the *Nat-var*, the Actor-Husband. As an Actor, Hari is experienced within. As a Husband, He comes to the world and is perceived with divine senses. Hari always delights in what is novel.

When Hari resides within the Svaminis' heart, the Svaminis are like yogis absorbed in meditative trance, but because that state lacks the outward experience of Hari, they are not satisfied. They need Shri Krishna to appear to them in their world.

Only then is *ras* for them
Balanced and replete.

To perfect the experience of *ras*, Hari appeared in a body. Without a vessel, the nectar is lost. It needs to be contained or it will spill. When Krishna becomes a concentrated pure form, the Svaminijis taste His *ras*.

His body is the vessel
From where they drink.

To see Hari you must understand His form. Krishna's ears are adorned with flowers. They exhibit His two-fold nature of union and separation. They are Hari's natural adornments. When He puts flowers behind His ears or in His hair, He indicates to the blessed Svaminis that He is the complete *ras*, the total nectar.

Lila-ras is independent.
It is not tasted with practice,
It arrives on its own accord.
It is concealed.

It resides and develops in the realms of utmost secrecy. When it is too revealed, improperly displayed, or unguarded, it vanishes. To protect this delicate devotional elixir, Krishna wears cloth as brilliant as gold. It baffles and bedazzles.

Hari's golden shawl is as brilliant as the sun and confusing like *maya*. Even the Svaminis cannot always penetrate the splendour of it. Its shimmering effect makes it very difficult to know, penetrate or understand what is underneath it. His clothes are similar to gold, they infatuate the mind. Hari's golden shawl envelopes His bliss form, it is a divine protector:

It guards the nectar and
Keeps it from spilling
And trickling towards the unqualified ones.

What is profound cannot be inappropriately displayed. For this reason Hari uses *maya* to veil His own glory. When His golden shawl, His *pitambar* is so radiant that it is impossible to gaze at, then what to speak of the *ras* that surges behind it in the form of Shri Krishna!

Hari wears a forest garland. It is threaded with fresh flowers that grow wild in the Vrindavan bowers. This garland not only safeguards His excellence, but increases His fame. When this victorious garland rests upon Hari, it awakens within the Svaminis of Braja, the *bhava*s of union and separation.

It heightens their amorous mood.
And transmits spiritual victory.

When Shri Krishna wears the victorious garland He shows how He conceals the nectar.

This is what afflicts
His Vrindavan lovers.

The *lila* of Hari's name, was brought forth when He played the flute. Krishna's flute has seven openings. When He fills those holes with His essence, a threefold elixir arises.

Devabhoga
A *ras* that is experienced by the gods.

Bhagavatbhogya
A *ras* that is experienced by Krishna.

Sarvabogya
A *ras* enjoyed by none.

Devabhoga is the nectar that is enjoyed by the divinities of Vrindavan. The gods are the cows and cowlads as well as the other blessed residents of Vrindavan. They reside within the *lila* abode and join in the games.

Bhagavatbhogya is the nectar that Hari Himself enjoys. He can only take pleasure in the flavor of Vrindavan after the sound of His flute enters the Svaminis' ears and fills their hearts. This makes them worthy of being enjoyed by God. The call of the flute made everything in Vrindavan divine, then it was tasted by Shri Krishna.

Sarvabhogya, enjoyed by none, has a special meaning. The call of the flute is fluid and enabled Hari's form to pass easily through the channels of the flute into the ears of the Svaminis. Then it pervaded their hearts and senses and made them aware of His presence. Although that nectar was directly enjoyed by

none, it transformed the Svaminis and made them worthy.

These three types of nectar arose due to the presence of Krishna's yearning lip upon the flute. Although it appears that the flute was between the Svaminis and Hari, they experienced Him directly. That *ras* was not a leftover already enjoyed by another. The Svaminis are qualified to hear the call directly. Whoever heard the call became spiritually accomplished or, *lila*-ready. They became bhaktas and bliss arose and flowed through them, all around them.

They became overjoyed
And experienced something
Beyond liberation.
The bliss they savored
Was essential-
The source of all rapture.

This *ras* is unattainable through any discipline. In order to join them with *Brahman* and His sound, the flute appeared and through its holes poured Krishna devoid of form. He became a current of sound and filled Vrindavan with His wonder. It was all accomplished through those seven holes and the breath of Hari.

For that song to appear, Krishna did not even have to touch the flute. The nectar was transferred directly from Him to the Svaminis. The flute only appeared as the medium. The connection was from Hari to their ears and then into their hearts. The song enabled them to sing of His excellence. It was an empowerment, transforming them and making them *lila*-worthy.

To be enjoyed by Him
They attained divine form, for
Krishna only likes
What is sublime and delightful.
It is only when
Ras completely engulfs the soul

That the blessed one
Can come face to face with Hari.

The Svaminis of Braja have been brought to this blessed position and are now able to be enjoyed by Hari. They are deserving of His delight. These Svaminis are so close to Him that they can see Him. Now hear their Krishna song. This *lila* entrance allows them the perfection of *nirodha*, which is,

A divine state of consciousness
Where the bhakta becomes
Oblivious to the world
And totally attached to God.

Hari has transported them there, into the state of *nirodha* where nothing besides God is recognized. Everything else has come to a standstill.

Hari has constrained
The Gopis and Gopas.
He has retained them
In His perfect world.
Only those who live there
Can understand Hari's *ras*.
No other taste can compare.

Nirodha only arises after the emergence of devotion. Then there is *lila* and Krishna enjoys the soul. After *nirodha*, the bhakta is forever liberated and rests in Hari's refuge. If liberation and refuge did not arise from Hari's enjoyment of the soul, then His entire *ras* creation would lose meaning. If that would happen then Hari's play would have no objective. Hence the divine order:

Nirodha is to be restrained by Hari
In the realm of elixir.
Then the soul becomes liberated.
And rests in His perfect shelter.

This is what happened to the Svaminis of Braja, the gurus of the *bhakti* path. The divine Lakshmi understands the nature of that joy and she delights in it. The *lila ras* is the unsurpassed reward. Before there is *lila* entrance, one must understand as Shri Lakshmi does, that *Brahman* is also:

Infinite beyond time and space,
Beyond all worldly form.
Imperishable, the source of creation and
The formless abode of liberation.

When this is taken to heart, the bhakta rises to *lila*, to unbounded, perfect and total bliss. The Svaminis of Vrindavan are manifestations of Shri Laxshmi. She is the Supreme Goddess. The Svaminis' attainment of the nectar that Laxshmi revels in was a gradual procedure. They first came to know Krishna as God and then desired Him as their husband. For this they underwent a spiritual training and fully realized Him in the *lila* dance.

Hari's dance with the Svaminis is known as the *rasa lila*, a collection of *ras*. It is all part of *nirodha*, the great reward. In the state of *nirodha*, there is total absorption into *lila*-consciousness where Shri Krishna is exposed. *Nirodha* allows this realization.

The sage Sukadeva is explaining to us the devotional nature of the Svaminis of Braja who have left everything for Hari. They are the *bhakti* experts and are accomplished.

First Krishna enjoyed them.
Then Krishna was enjoyed.
In the surge of grace
The roles reversed.
The Svaminis enjoyed Krishna
The way He enjoyed them.

The Svaminis are the God-enjoyers. They are the best women. The Svaminis we speak of here are called the *Agni Kumars*, the Fire Virgins. They enjoyed only Shri Krishna and

could only be enjoyed by Him. They were unmarried and attached solely to Him.

They knew the Absolute.
They tasted it, the supreme flavor.

The source of these teachings is the *Bhagavat* which removes all suffering, endows wisdom and brings forth the reward. When the Svaminis attained insight, they prayed to have Hari as their husbands. Krishna then brought them totally under His control. He gave them the nectar of His lips and engaged them in uninhibited *lila*.

When Krishna is surrounded by His cowlad friends, this gathering has deep significance. They are gods who have incarnated to play with Krishna. The Svamini's entrance into the perfect abode of Vrindavan is only with Hari. Shri Krishna's penetration into the Vrindavan forests is really His entrance into the Svamini's bower of love-play.

The Svamini's inner Vrindavan
Is unknown to even to the cowlads.
Their union with Him
Knows no boundaries.

If you ask, "What does all of this have to do with devotion?" The answer is everything:

Krishna's lotus feet, the very form of devotion, purify.
They have appeared not only for play,
But to establish *bhakti* in Hari's people.

Krishna plants dharma with His cowlad associates when they sing of His glories. At that moment, all worthy pursuits are attained. Their song of Krishna contains His substance and in the Path of Grace, the esoteric core teachings are found in the Svamini *bhava*.

Hari appeared as Krishna
His essence is His love,
His feeling, His *bhava* for Svamini.

This is the true meaning of
Blissful Krishna.
It is also the secret essential teaching
Of the Blessed Path.

The *Gopis'* ecstatic praise began
when they heard the flute.
After imbibing its sound,
all other pursuits appeared trivial.

The sage Sukadeva, the forever liberated one, continues to explain the amazing *lila* to the attentive King Parikshit.

6

The Second Call

"O king, the bhaktas of Braja
Heard the sound of the flute.
It mesmerized all sentient beings
And transported the Svaminis of Braja
Into a mood of dalliance."
(Bhagavat 10/18/6)

SUBODHINI

The sound of Krishna's flute was the reason for the Gopis' blissful song. Hearing its elixir as a tone, they spontaneously began to praise their beloved Hari. They forgot everything and actually began to participate in the *lila* from the privacy of their homes. They became witnesses to Hari's play.

The first call of Krishna's flute
Contained fire and created overwhelming desire.

The second call contains the nectar of His lip
And removes the separation and distance
They feel from Hari.

When the Svaminis of Vrindavan rose to hear the second song of Shri Krishna's flute, they attained its nectar. They became wise with exalted understanding. It gave them the inspiration to sing.

King Parikshit is listening to the story. He is a ruler of men and righteous, yet the subtlety of Krishna's *ras* is beyond him. He listens to the *lila* with the aim of liberation. As he is not seeking the nectar of devotion, he cannot grasp the essence of *lila* and so its full meaning is not discovered by him. Still, he is fascinated by the account because the call of Hari's flute is:

Enchanting to all,
Regardless of position or aptitude.
It is all-attractive
Like Krishna.

Within the notes of the flute
Resides Hari's prameya bal

His power of grace.
Everyone is effortlessly attracted.

The Svaminis were fascinated with Krishna even before they heard the song of His flute. When Hari's tones filled their ears, the Svaminis were enchanted and they started to sing. Their lives became filled with *lila* dalliance.

The song entered their ears
And then filled their noble hearts.
In the form of song, the pure praise.

Now we will be blessed with the Svamini's descriptions of the *lila*. Their visions arose because of the flute. They had a unique situation: every morning their husbands would leave to herd cows in the forest with Krishna. Since the Svaminis had nowhere to go and their husbands would not return until the end of the day, they had ample, uninterrupted free time to explore the inner recesses of their *lila* hearts. They were free from other occupations and could totally engage in focusing on Shri Krishna's *lila*.

They sang, they rejoiced, and were oblivious
To all the pains of the world.
They dallied in the ocean of Supreme Bliss.
No longer obstructed by overwhelming desires

That blocked their bhakti-filled hearts.

Hari's nectar has made its way into their souls. It has completely penetrated their beings. The effect is the song in praise of the flute and its fluid Krishna nectar. The Svaminis sing thirteen songs in praise of Hari's flute. Now they are able to sing and there is a divine order to their flood of devotion.

Their first song tells of their union with Krishna, the second, of their separation. The petal of love has two sides. *Ras* flourishes when the cycle of love is lost, searched for and found. This all occurs within their inner and outer *lila*s. Their inward expression

of devotion is separation.

Union is found in Hari's outward manifestation. When the Svaminis hear the call of Krishna's flute, both the *ras* of union and separation arise. At times they flow into each other.

In the third song, the Svaminis sing with some jealousy about the flute and how it is positioned close to Shri Krishna's lips. How it is so filled with His nectar that it can pass it on to others, even to the trees. Then a Svamini sings of the unrestricted movement of Shri Hari's feet in Vrindavan and how their appearance has blessed the world. The following six songs reveal the blissful effects the call of the flute had upon the blessed ones who were able to hear.

The Svaminis tell of what happened to the deer
Who worshiped Krishna with their eyes.
They speak of the Apsaras, those heavenly women
Who were overpowered by Hari's presence.

The Svaminis speak of the way cows stopped chewing their beloved *grass* when they heard the call. They go on to describe how the birds, those sages from another era, gazed in meditation upon Hari's *lila*. The Svaminis relate to us how rivers stopped flowing and the way clouds provided Krishna with shade and offered Him their essence.

Amazing are the effects that flute had upon the blessed subjects of Vrindavan. Everyone was enraptured by the call and their world became exalted and sublime. Their experiences are the subject of this *lila* song. We learn of their divine conditions through the love-intoxicated voices of the Svaminis.

The next two songs by the Svaminis are in praise of Hari's flute and how it establishes *bhakti*, the devotional yoga. The devotion we witness in the Vrindavan mode should never be interpreted to be something mundane.

Bhakti is purifying
And supports contradiciton.

If the exalted nature does not arise, then all that is common would be seen as divine and true divinity would be unrecognized. When *lila* arises, impurities vanish and then there is transformation.

When the unconscious becomes conscious,
When rivers stop their flow to listen,
The greatness of *bhakti* is revealed.

Hari's lotus feet uplifted tribal women who were devoid of proper initiation to *lila*. *Bhakti* makes the unworthy worthy. All contradictions are resolved and made perfect within devotion.

The *lilas* of Shri Krishna follow no norm, they blatantly challenge the known and accepted movements of the world. When Shri Krishna herds His cows through the Vrindavan glades, the entire forest becomes pure. Everything and everyone attains their perfect position, conversant with the nature of Hari's unending, increasing bliss.

Due to the intensity of Hari's love, many of the Svaminis were unable to bear His first call. Now that they have fathomed His second call, they regained composure and can praise Krishna's Bliss Form. The surge of His loving nature is fully contained and overflows into song. A Svamini begins:

7

The Ultimate Reward

"O friends, we know that the reward
Of beholding the sons of Nanda,
Balaram and Krishna as they
Play their flutes and
Herd their cows through Vrindavan forests
Is the fruit of having eyes.
It is the endowment of the senses.

Having experienced this we now have no use
For any other enlightenment or liberation."
(Bhagavat 10/18/7)

SUBODHINI

We experience Krishna with our eyes, we feel Him through all of our senses. Hari is the desire, the festival of our hearts. To imbibe Krishna's form is the ultimate reward.

To have conversations with God,
To behold Him, to embrace Him
Is what we live for.
To please Him,
To serve Him,
To touch Him,
To taste the nectar of His lips.
We need to thoroughly enjoy Hari
Until every hair on our bodies
Stands erect with bliss.

"We have heard the nectar of His flute and now savor His fragrance everywhere. We approach Krishna directly and stand in His joyful proximity. We integrate all of these *bhavas* continually into our devotion. Understand us. We know that the fruit of attaining human form is to use God-given senses to experience God. To join them in Hari's pleasure.

To behold Him with eyes.
Or better yet, with all senses.
To imbibe His form, His divine essence.
For us, that alone is the reward.

"We have no use for that liberation of merging into *Brahman* where the ability to taste and discern Him is annihilated. We Svaminis of Braja know that Krishna is *Brahman* and have been blessed with the ability to know Him through all of our senses.

"Senses have the power to experience divinity and those who deny this truth are trapped in a totally dark room and claim, Our eyes are useless.

To them we say,
'Open the door, let in the lila-light.'

Allow the fruit of vision to emerge. Don't deny your eyes and senses the reward of beholding Shri Krishna.'"

"Why forbid senses the right to perceive? Why look at perception as some sort of disturbance? Why consider the world to be impermanent or mayic? Can't you digest cognition?

Liberation for those who know
How to employ the senses
In Shri Krishna's pleasure
Appears to us as pure bondage.

"The enlightened devotional state will never arise if perceptions and feelings that are Hari-connected are considered as obstacles. The only obstructions we see are those that keep us from experiencing Krishna's nectar.

You need to leave behind only one thing:
That which is not for His pleasure.

"Not even the liberation of the aspiring Yogi can compare to our reward. We taste Krishna, we behold Him with eyes and senses. If we merged with Hari, we would not be allowed the opportunity to experience Him. If you wonder what the Srutis, the holy scriptures, the authorities on the subject of liberation have to say about all of this:

We Svaminis are those Srutis!
We are the experts on the nature of the Divine Reward.

"We have come to Vrindavan as dairy-maids, but we

embody the highest insights of the Upanisads. What we expound upon in our scriptural word form can never contradict true spiritual experience.

"Some aspirants realize *Brahman* only from the inner recesses of their soul. They disregard that same *Brahman* when He appeals to their senses. They may sever their worldly ties but:

The reward for those who experience
Krishna Bliss within and without
Through all channels of perception,
Stands far above those
Who know Him merely as impersonal *Brahman*,
Devoid of all attire.

"We have come to this decision as a group. Before we incarnated here with Hari, we were the words and lines of the scriptures. Once, we were blessed with the sight of Vrindavan and requested Hari to have a part in His *lila*. Our gathering here in Vrindavan encompasses a vast body of sacred lore. Our teachings on the subject of liberation are most elevated.

These are the teachings of the congregated Svaminis.
We are the various incarnations of scripture,
Our findings span the breath of divine word.
O friends, we are of one mind and heart.

"We are united in our obsession with Krishna. What we reveal to you are the undiluted *ras* teachings. We have experienced them.

"We observe Krishna as He enters and wanders through the Vrindavan groves. He is accompanied by His band of joyful cowlads. They have gathered together to herd their cows. We behold with purified eyes and senses Krishna and his older brother Balaram leading the group.

Blessed are those who can see Him.
Even more blessed are those

Who can savor Hari ras
With all of their senses.

"Those cowlads who are with Krishna are not as blessed as we Svaminis. They herd cows with Krishna, they have His friendship, but are not connaisseurs of the refined mood. The forests they roam are not the glades of the Svaminis romance. Although their *bhava* is totally pure, they do not have access to the *nirguna-lila*, the amorous Krishna-Svamini *lila*.

That space is reserved for us
And is beyond anything material.

"Krishna uses time; it is one of His instruments. The forest *lila*, His cowlads and everything in Vrindavan appears within its boundaries. Krishna has come with His friends.

They are in Krishna's time
And are Krishna's age.

"They appeared for the causeless sake of *lila*. They walk with Him behind the cows and help other herders who occasionally become too tired to track down strays."

The Svaminis observe this entire *lila*.
Balaram and Krishna are together, but
Krishna's *bhava* and beauty overshadows Balaram's
And the Svaminis see only Krishna's face.

"Our love is one-pointed, We see the beloved's face everywhere. All forms have become His expansions. Our love for Hari is whole."

Some Svaminis who understand *lila-ras* can hear the flute's divine melody. Other Svaminis hear the call and imbibe His lotus-like face into their hearts. Shri Krishna's darshan deeply penetrates their intelligence, minds, reason and individuality. Hari siezes those lovers' hearts and minds. They know of no

higher reward.

There are some other bhaktas who can only hear the flute. They find it enchanting and are carried away by its melody. They do not fathom it's full spiritual range. They focus on its musical element and are interested in learning how to play. They consider, "We would like to learn to play as well as Krishna."

But the Svaminis who yearn for Him see Krishna's face. They receive the fruit of having eyes. The most blessed ones savor Him with all their senses, they are *nirguna*, beyond all qualities. The ones who just see Hari have a particular virtue.

Now the nature of Shri Krishna's *ras*-form using a description of what He wears when He herds the cows with His brother Balaram is described.

8

Krishna Ras

"Krishna and Balaram place mango leaves
Behind their ears
And wear peacock feathers as crowns.
Graced with lotus malas around Their necks,
They wear yellow garments.
Their attire is remarkable.

Krishna is surrounded by His cowlads.
They are singing of the lila.
The two brothers appear like renowned actors,
Performing upon the stage of the world."
(Bhagavat 10/18/8)

SUBODHINI

"To understand the nature of *ras* listen carefully to our descriptions of Krishna and Balaram's attire. Their peacock feathers are secured to Their heads with yellow turbans. They tuck mango leaves behind their ears and long garlands made of fresh lotuses grace their necks and swing over their yellow *dhotis*. Their garb is very striking. They are with Their friends and everyone is singing. When we observe Krishna and His *lila*, our experience of *ras* increases.

Krishna uses a combination of divine deluding *maya*
And His own attributes to create a spellbinding attire.

"For the development of *bhakti ras* in those who are eligible, Balaram incarnates with Shri Krishna with four types of ornaments.

In the mango leaves there is *ras*,
In the peacock feather, form,
In the lotus garland, fragrance,
His yellow clothes, like concealing *maya*,
Screen His essential form.

"What Krishna wears has great inner meaning. His embellishments create *ras*. The *lila*-nature of his adornments is known to His bhaktas through devotion.

"The mango leaves adorn His ears; they represent the foundation of *ras* and the state of Love. O friends, the mango fruit contains nectar and the fresh tender mango leaves that Krishna adorns Himself with support the nectar of the fruit. They cultivate the fruit and allow it to appear. Those leaves provide the necessary nourishment for the mango nectar to arise. When

Krishna uses mango leaves for his adornment, He is telling us that:

Pure *ras* arises from Me.
Ras takes refuge in Me.

"Then His peacock feathers, with colorful eyes, manifest with form to keep the *ras* flowing. Krishna ties them to His head. They flutter with His movements and are a catalyst for the nectar. This is called *vyabhichari bhava*, a transitory feeling that strengthens the *ras* and spreads its wonder all about.

It creates Attachment.

"When *bhava* arises in the form of those peacock feathers, the inner meaning of *ras* scripture is understood: He is comprised of pure bliss. Then the bhakta becomes

Addicted to God.

"That divine state is expressed by Shri Krishna's flower garland. This third *lila* component is called *anubhava*. It is an external manifestation of a feeling, of a *bhava* conveyed by a look or gesture. *Anubhava* is indicated in Hari's lotus garland and demonstrates the bhakta's experience of Krishna.

"Upon inhaling the fragrance of the lotus, its effect is seen in facial expression; eyes speak of the sweetness. It is a direct experience of *ras* and that lotus reminds us of Krishna's delicious embraces.

"The fourth element in the magical performance is His yellow shawl. It is dazzling and conceals, like *maya*, His bliss form. Too much exposure can interfere with the *ras*, thus the divine character is always veiled.

Krishna exposes and conceals Himself
To maintain the magic and majesty of *ras*.

"The firm mood of love is created, revealed, enhanced, experienced and hidden by mango leaves, peacock feathers, lotus garlands and yellow cloth.

"Many *bhava*s appear from the mango leaves. They are *rajas* and therefore create activity. The peacock feathers are *tamas*; they promote an obstinate and firm love in Hari's form. The lotus garlands are *sattva*; they allow the sensitive soul the understanding that *ras* exists within all things. Krishna reveals:

In mango leaves I am perfect *ras*,
In peacock feathers I am beautiful,
In lotus garlands I am aromatic,
In my shawl I am hidden.

"When actors or poets perform on a stage and their words enter the listeners' ears and hearts, this speech can produce a *ras*. They can make the audience laugh or cry. The listener becomes engaged and experiences the *ras* of the performance. In a similar way, the Svaminis experience a profound *ras* from Krishna's *lila* performance. Although He is not before them, His *lila* manifests through their song about the flute.

"Krishna wears mango leaves to show that the fruit of devotion is filled with *ras*. When that is understood, knowledge arises and is accompanied by insight into the Nectar-Nature of things, an inner comprehension of *ras*. This sprouting of correct *lila*-appreciation is displayed in Krishna's peacock feathers. When there is an understanding of the nature of the fruit, that it is filled with perfect *ras*,

There is experience.

"When this transformation occurs, the brilliance of *bhakti* is seen in the face and detected in the eyes. To show this progression, Krishna wears flowers and becomes spellbinding.

Mango leaves show love.
Peacock feathers reveal divine attachment,
While Krishna's lotus garland demonstrates addiction.

"When there is addiction, the bhakta can no longer live without Him. A yearning for Him becomes constant. Shri Krishna suddenly remembers, 'There should be some covering. I will not reveal everything.'

"To protect *ras* there must be discretion and Krishna accomplishes this with his *pitambar*, His yellow shawl. It is the *mayic* curtain, the protector of secrets.

Only when *ras* appears can it be tasted.
Once tasted there is dance and beauty.
In *lila* Krishna reveals esoteric *ras*.
Know it to be the supreme secret arising
In the company of the Vrindavan Svaminis.

"Every *ras* has converged within Hari's attire. *Ras* arises when the three qualities of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva* intermingle and make nine different impressions. *Ras* varies infinitely according to its components. Any *ras* that is connected to Krishna becomes Krishna *ras* regardless of attributes. Shri Krishna is pure *ras* and His *ras* is enhanced and nourished by the songs and instruments of His companions.

"Balaram and Krishna are splendid. They shine brightly when they are surrounded by their circle of friends. Krishna's cowlad associates are innocent boys. The *ras* they enjoy with Krishna is simple and natural. Their dance, song and instruments are all equally balanced and exalted, yet at times their dance excels.

"Krishna is beyond law, yet He also contains it. Balaram and Krishna appeared before our eyes as seasoned actors who have studied their parts well in accordance with the sacred rules of drama. As they move about Braja, they always appear as if they are on a stage. Krishna is the best because His drama is purely divine.

Their dance is *rajas*,
It has movement and passion.
When they embellish it with song,

Their dance becomes *sattva*, so very pure.

"At times Krishna and His friends sing and move their hands in beautiful flowing motions.

This presentation is renowned
In the world of conscious beings.
And is effortless.

"We have explained the nature of *ras*. Now see how it is obtained."

Desire is natural
The sound of Krishna's flute
Transforms it.

Another Svamini, addicted to Shri Krishna explains to the other Gopis...

9

The Bamboo Flute

"O Gopis, what meritorious act
Has that bamboo flute performed
That has allowed it
To enjoy at will our property,
The nectar of Krishna's lips!

What is really surprising
Is that the ras it cannot enjoy
It passes on to the rivers and trees.
They have become so noble and utterly thrilled
That they pour forth tears of bliss."
(Bhagavat 10/18/9)

SUBODHINI

The Svaminis know that the *ras* they worship Krishna with, now as before, is the Love-Elixir. This inspires one to say, "Even if that flute does not imbibe directly the nectar of His lips, it appears as if it does. Then again, our Krishna would never stoop to enjoy a bamboo flute. He delights only in women and that reed is the wrong gender. The nectar of His lips is reserved for us. We stand united and Laxshmi lives within each of us.

Everyone knows that only the goddess of beauty
Has the right to enjoy Him!

"A real man would never enjoy a reed like Krishna's flute. Imagine taking delight in such a thing! It does not even have human form. It is totally impossible for Hari to delight in it. But we should also consider:

Divine things are always filled with consciousness
Regardless of what they are or where they live.

"We should sit down as a group and all the Svaminis should consider this important matter of Krishna's relationship with that flute!

What has that bamboo reed done
To be allowed the exalted reward of
Connection with Shri Krishna's lips?

"The fruit of dharma corresponds directly to actions. It is the law of karma. Now we should all deliberate upon the dharma and practice of that flute. Only then can we understand how it came into such intimate contact with our Beloved.

Dharma is perfected in the Vedas.
We may appear as dairy-maids,
Yet we are the manifested divinities
Of those holy words, appearing in human form.

"Our incarnations are high yet we still cannot fathom the ways of that common reed. After all, what virtue can a stick of wood have? We have undergone all the necessary spiritual practices in this and other births. Our path lies in compliance with the Vedas. We have not contradicted the spirit of the sacred law in word or action. Besides this vast wealth, we are also divine women. Compared to us, what possible merit could that flute have that allows it contact with Shri Krishna's lips?"

A cloud of doubt arises in the Svaminis' minds
Concerning the reward
Krishna freely gives
To a river reed.

"O Gopis, we need to consider this matter carefully. But look:

That flute is a man,
Impossible for Krishna to enjoy.
It has entirely the wrong form.

"That flute could not have received the real reward. It has no *sadhana* and without practice, there is no reward. Yet it did receive the reward, although it lacks integrity in both practice and fruit. The only thing to consider at this point is the meaning of the word *venu* or flute.

The rapture of the *venu*,
Shri Krishna's flute,
Makes the joy of the world
As well as the bliss of Brahman
Both appear worthless.

"One other positive thing we can say about that flute is that it affords its own pleasure to others. We also acknowledge that Shri Krishna puts the flute to His nectar-filled lips. We remain confused about whether that reed achieved its position through its own efforts or by the strength of Shri Krishna's grace.

We do not believe that a reward as excellent as Krishna
Can be attained through effort or practice.
In the light of grace,
Prescribed practice appears inadequate.

"For us, Krishna is Damodar. He falls under the sway of the bhaktas who have humility. Krishna was Damodar when His mother Yashoda tried to bind Him, but was always short of rope. When she became overwhelmed by her inability to bind *Brahman*, she began to weep. At that point Krishna became Damodar and although Boundless, allowed Himself to be bound.

Krishna's lips are the abode of yearning
Unattainable through any discipline.

"To taste *ras*, you need a tongue or at least some sense organ that that reed lacks. What can it know of nectar?" Then another Svamini explains,

"I think the flute can enjoy *ras* because the scriptures claim that, 'His nectar entered the vegetable kingdom.'

I realize we have been claiming that Krishna's flute is unworthy of His *ras*, but what if it is Hari's wish to bestow the priceless gift? After all, He showered that immortal elixir upon women who looked upon Him as a paramour. He has given His *ras* to others who would appear unworthy to us. What would stop Him from spreading that grace to a flute? It is amazing to me that we Svaminis of Vrindavan have been blessed with some of His nectar! Apparently that reed has reaped the same good fortune.

That flute has even excelled us by giving the rivers and the trees any *ras* that it could not imbibe. It nourishes the trees and

the rivers the way a good son would support his aging parents. Its mother is the river, its father the trees. It knows how to pay respect to its source and elders by affording them an overflow of Hari's nectar.

The river imbibes the *ras*.
It is thrilled with joy
And feels bliss upon bliss.

"Bhaktas who experience a flood of inner bliss find their hairs standing on end. Look what has happened to that river. After imbibing the flute's *ras*, her hairs stood on end and appeared as lotuses in her waters. This is a testimony to the thrill of her inner experience.

The lotus is considered to be the best of flowers.
If that river was not thrilled with inner bliss
Then instead of blooming lotuses,
The river would breed algae.

"Through the grace of Krishna's flute, that blessed river imbibed God's essence. Now Laxshmi, the goddess of splendor has decided to live within lotuses for it is said that,

When something excellent is seen,
A person can not overcome
The desire to possess it.

"Seeing those fine lotuses, Shri Laxshmi, the consort of our Krishna, first desired them and then entered them. She can fully enjoy the lotus as one of her forms.

"The flute not only blessed its mother, the river, but also turned its graceful attention towards its father, the trees. When the trees imbibed Hari's *ras*, they exuded sweet nectar and fruit suddenly appeared on their boughs. All of this could not have occurred without the introduction of Krishna's *ras*.

To be totally full of bliss,
To have your hairs stand on end,
These are not common experiences,
Yet in Vrindavan, even trees and rivers have them.

"It was after they had contact with that flute that this remarkable transformation of nature took place. This is why we consider the trees and rivers to be so noble. They are like holy men whose hairs stand erect with bliss on their bodies after imbibing Hari's dharma into their hearts. Tears pour from their eyes; they are in devotional rapture. The rivers and the trees of Vrindavan have attained this same state. It all happened after they imbibed Hari's *ras*,

The river blossomed with lotuses
The trees bore fruit.

"Now hear of Shri Krishna's lotus feet as they play in Vrindavan."

10

Lotus Feet

"O friends, Vrindavan increases
The fame of the world.
It has been blessed with the touch of
Krishna's lotus feet, attained by Lakshmi,
That supreme goddess of splendor.

When Govinda plays His flute
The intoxicated peacocks dance.
Seeing them, the other inhabitants
Of the Govardhana Hill
Stand perfectly still, spellbound."
(Bhagavat 10/18/10)

SUBODHINI

"It appears odd to us that the gods and other higher divinities will not set foot here, yet Shri Krishna, the God of gods, walks here all the time. We have been told that,

This world is His mundane form.
His spiritual form is beyond perception,
His divine form is comprised of Soild Bliss.

"We have also heard that His spiritual and divine forms never appear upon the earth. But look here,

Our darling Krishna wanders all over Vrindavan.
He has come to this unworthy place of demons,
But Vrindavan is a sacred forest
And has an alliance with women.

"The women of Vrindavan are the blessed bhaktas of His loving devotion. This is why Krishna firmly places His lotus feet on this land. His presence here has made the groves and forests sacred. They are totally sanctified."

While praising Him, a Svamini's heart wells with a mixture of devotional ecstasy and jealousy. She begins: "Krishna, look here, our hearts are just like the sacred realm of Vrindavan, so place Your lotus feet upon them. Just consider them a part of the Vrindavan You so much love to wander. Even though women's breasts can be hard and hilly, place Your lotus feet upon them. Know our inner reality is rich with Your nectar.

It flows like the Yamuna river.
All the pores of our bodies are
Wells brimming with your ras.

"Vrindavan's connection is with women and You are the only man here. There is no distinction between us and Vrindavan, so place your lotus feet upon our Vrindavan hearts."

Another Svamini has become jealous of Vrindavan and relates, "All those other Gopis who have sung before us about the flute have done so while being under the influence of the material modes. The Svaminis here are of one mind, we are beyond any effects. We are "*nirguna*", beyond it all and therefore we could never be envious."

But in fact this Svamini is very jealous
And it makes her devotion burn brightly.

Another Svamini innocently remarks, "When His feet appear in the expansive eternal realm of Vaikuntha, then what is so unusual about them appearing here?"

Krishna, who is unattainable by even the gods,
Has agreed to appear on the earth
And wander the Vrindavan abode.

"The fact that He has blessed the earth is amazing. Vrindavan has been directly touched and blessed by Krishna. Vrindavan now increases the glory of the world and therefore it is worthy of praise. We cannot claim that Krishna always resides here, but we can say that in Vrindavan there is a constant presence of His lotus feet.

"Krishna is independent and only reveals Himself occasionally. Not even Vrindavan has the power to bring forth His darshan. His vision is attained everywhere only by means of devotion. But without devotion, even Vrindavan becomes devoid of fame.

"Vrindavan owes all of its glory to Krishna's lotus feet. They carry the auspicious images of the flag, thunderbolt and barley grass. His lotus feet have been attained by Laxshmi and create great splendor wherever they go. For us, Krishna is the son of Devaki. We can't relate to that child Krishna, the son of Yashoda.

For us, Krishna has appeared from Devaki, but she had little to do with Him after giving birth. So Krishna's attention is not there, but with us. Krishna, the son of Devaki, is our Lord of uninhibited love-play.

For Krishna, women are important
For they are the devotional ones.
Because they are in love with God, Krishna graces them.
In the Path of Grace, women bhaktas predominate.
They are the ones who know Hari.

"The lotus appears from water and Krishna's feet are lotus-like. In the Path of Bhakti, Krishna's lotus feet are unsurpassed. They remove the distress of the Svamini's spiritual heart and create great splendor wherever they go.

"Hari's lotus feet find their highest manifestation in Vrindavan. For this reason, even Laxshmi continually resides here. The Vrindavan ground is soft and has attained great fame from the having the touch of Krishna's lotus-like feet. Vrindavan contains not only Shri, the great beauty, but also knowledge and devotion. This is all due to the presence of Govinda. "When He plays the flute, its song is like rumbling swarthy clouds. It intoxicates the peacocks and makes them dance.

Whoever can hear Hari's flute forgets all bodily concerns.
It makes them dance with increasing bhakti.

"Vrindavan is praiseworthy. Upon seeing the peacocks dance to the song of Shri Krishna's flute, all the resident animals on the Govardhan hill become stunned. They all received from that divine spectacle not only knowledge of God, but *bhakti* as well. Except for one, they were all oriented towards knowledge of God.

"The question could be raised that if knowledge exists above, then how can animals living in burrows below taste the higher fruit of knowledge?

"Although they are lowly animals, they are full of know-

ledge. They lived below but climbed to the top of the Govardhan Hill from where they were able to behold the *lila*. It has made them pure.

They are the worthy ones.
They left their worldly holes
And climbed above,
To behold Krishna."

Having explained the nature of the flute, now we will hear of its six divine virtues in the next six slokas.

11

The Deer

"Behold those simple-minded,
yet most blessed deer.
While standing in the forest with their
husbands,
They have heard Krishna's flute.
Now their eyes overflow with love
And worship for
Shri Krishna, the son of Nanda.
Hari's attire astonishes even them."
(Bhagavat 10/18/11)

SUBODHINI

"Our Krishna is the holder of the six divine virtues. They are

Lordship, Potency, Fame,
Splendor, Knowledge and Renunciation.

"We call Him Bhagavan because He perfectly contains these virtues. This song of His flute shows how He balances these amazing aspects within the world of form. They arose when the deer, the celestial women, Vrindavan, the cows, the birds, the Yamuna river as well as the clouds imbibed His call.

Whenever you see the simple-minded worship
The Blessed Lord unpromptedly, know that
Unconditional lordship has appeared
Within the world of beings.

"The greatness of our Hari is that He is free from all conditions. He has no need to display His excellence. Most people can only worship what they can see or places that others have already honored. Only the wise can behold concealed greatness, like those deer, their lovely knowledge-laden eyes knew to worship Hari. In the *lila* with the deer, Krishna reveals His greatness.

Hari's potency was shown in the Apsara lila.
Those heavenly women who heard Krishna's call,
Despite being accompanied by their husbands,
Fell unconscious, overpowered by Krishna's love.

"Celestial women are never satisfied by mortal men. They require a totally different type of *ras* and it does not even appear

in this world. Krishna skillfully displayed His omnipotence by appearing upon the earth and without a single touch was able to totally enchant them with a note of His flute. In the great wave of Krishna passion, they forgot their husbands and fell spellbound.

Krishna revealed His fame
When those simple cows gazed upon Him.
They suspended their grass-chewing
In order to fully engage themselves with Hari.

"You see, true fame is distinctive. It can sway someone away from their addictions and naturally establish itself in that place. For cows, grass is nectar and they always consume it. When they heard the call, their ears perked up and when His nectar filled their beings, mouthfuls of chewed grass remained unswallowed. Everything came to a complete standstill as they imbibed Hari's elixir. This *lila* with the cows expanded Krishna's fame.

"The song of the flute contains the three-fold qualities of *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*. It also contains what is beyond all virtues, *nirguna*. Vrindavan, the sagious birds and the Govardhan Hill, are all *nirguna*.

Whoever loves them,
Becomes like them,
Nirguna.

"We Svaminis of Braja love the Vrindavan forest. There in its unseen glades we have dallied with Krishna. From the Vrindavan grove, those who have risen above all worldly merit can peer out while others cannot see in. The birds of Vrindavan, those sages from another era, have incarnated in Vrindavan to observe the *lila*. They can do so from their high branches because they are *nirguna*. The Govardhan Hill is also *nirguna* and with its roots, caves and springs It offers endless support for *lila*. Those blessed ones who have insight and love can enter the *lila* abode,

Liberated and
Ever-expanding with bliss.

The Srutis say,
'When a man completely delights in
The Goddess of Fortune,
The *vina* sounds.'

"From this passage now understand the position of the Vrindavan birds. They have attained *Shri*, the supreme beauty. They are all delighted in Krishna. While sitting in their trees, they have heard the flute and enjoyed its splendor. They know its *Shri* element. It is hidden deep within Krishna and they have discovered it. Only then did they hear the flute. When a bhakta attains *Shri*, there is victory over the lower nature.

When you transcend your lower nature
You attain true knowledge.
And then there is refuge and dedication
That creates love for Hari's lotus feet.

"In grace-filled renunciation, the bhakta attains the power to remove even the woes and complications of God Himself. This is the true *seva*, the blessed attitude to nourish and attain.

It is most worthy and arrives
With a flood of bliss.

"To be unattached to things of the world is elevated, yet common. When renunciation follows with love for Hari's feet, it inspires the total offering of body and soul. Then renunciation becomes devotional. But when renunciation rises to the level of selfless love, then there is an understanding of how to please Shri Krishna and take His refuge. Then the blessed soul can remove Hari's anguish like those clouds did when they sheltered Him from the hot sunrays.

"That blessed cloud showered her essence upon Krishna, She cooled Him with her flowers and rain. In the grace-filled renunciation, *seva* is focused on His pleasure. And that is why we say:

Blessed are those deer and the other residents of Braja
Who have revealed Hari's greatness.

"When action is embellished with wisdom, it shines. Only then does the undertaking become sublime. *Puja* is the blessed worship, the elevated action. It all becomes magnanimous when the objects used are infused with knowledge and are lovingly connected to Hari. This blessed worship is spoken of as two kinds:

Bhagavat jnan
Knowledge of Hari.
To know what Krishna needs at any time or place.

Sva jnan
Knowledge of Self.
To know how to offer magnificent things to Him.

"When we do not know when, where, how or what types of things to offer Hari, the undertaking becomes fruitless. Know how to connect everything to Hari. Know what He likes:

Know these two wisdoms,
Knowledge of Hari and Self.
Then your worship becomes refined
And full of meaning.

"Those deer may be very simple, but should not be looked down upon because they are animals. Of all females they are the blessed ones. They are the wives of the black Krishna deer who share our Beloved's name."

The Svaminis reflect on the nature of those Vrindavan deer

and they become very humble. They feel inadequate when they compare themselves to those blessed deer. The grace of Shri Krishna has allowed the Svaminis to reveal all that has happened to those deer. They witnessed their *lila* in its entirety and know the extent of the deer's fortune. They witnessed it with their own eyes.

A Svamini continued, "Those deer have seen Shri Krishna, the son of Nanda. They have heard the call of His flute. They have worshiped Him as they have honored Him before with their love-laden eyes.

"Krishna is Nandananda, the son of Nanda. Krishna is also a giver of bliss. Brahma the Creator once said, 'Krishna appears to perfect the bhaktas' lives.'

"To exhibit *ras*, Krishna appears adorned in a fantastic fashion. He came before those deer in a visible form. To ensure the performance would be a success, He dressed for the occasion,

Krishna is the doer,
The activity,
The means, as well as the reward.

"Krishna's amazing appearance is a statement to the *lila* participants:

'I contain every *ras*.'

"He appeared to those deer so as to allow them entrance into the bliss of *Brahman*. At first the deer could only hear the call of the flute. They could not grasp its tone or meaning. Scriptures suggest that some animals are not prone to profound perception. Perhaps this is the reason why at first they could not see Him and could only hear the call.

The note that Hari sounded was unique.
It made the deer realize that
In comparison to the *ras* of that song,
All other tastes are spiritless.

"Through that a*venu*e of sound He ensured that His *ras* would not spill from their hearts. Then the deer could approach Krishna. They forgot about their bodies and husbands and were no longer bound to the material dharma.

"The deer's husbands are called *Krishna Sar*, a name which implies that they are Krishna's essence. They understand the love their wives have for Krishna. They bear no resemblance to our husbands, our Gopas who herd cows with Krishna and don't even invite us along. If our husbands had any sense, they would learn from the black deer. They always take their wives along with them when they visit with Shri Krishna. What do our husbands know? They are full of pride while those deer are blessed.

They stand in the forest, their lotus-like eyes
Teeming with love are filled with *Lila*-Insight.
With those lotus eyes, they worship the Beloved.

"Wisdom is found in the fragrance of the lotus flower. From the lotus arises true understanding. Those lotus-eyed deer honor Krishna in an exalted manner. Established in His *seva*, they stand accomplished. Now Krishna, it is your turn and duty to look favorably upon us."

12

The Apsaras

"Those goddesses of heaven,
The Apsaras also behold Krishna.
He is charmingly adorned
And affords women pleasure.
The Apsaras have heard
The call of His amazing flute
And while rising in celestial flight
They are overwhelmed by His love.
Flowers fall from their braids,
The knots of their inner garments become untied."

SUBODHINI

Even the word "Krishna" is able to entrap women, those gentle-hearted devotional ones. Krishna is the master of the Svamini's *nirodha*. He is the Lord of constraining them into His own Divine World.

The sight of Krishna is blissful,
Krishna *sadhana* is joyous.
Blessed is the *bhava* of His attachment.
It provides constant elation.

A Svamini explains, "Those celestial women have seen Him and their vision has turned divine. They know that Krishna is immortal. He is the Primal One and they pridefully recall,

He has appeared for us, the Apsaras.
Behold His attire, splendid Krishna
Creates a festival within us.
He has appeared to afford us pleasure.

"The *Apsaras* consider that Krishna's celebrations are unlimited. They afford the eyes boundless rejoicing. This *lila* has manifested for the sole purpose of encountering His varied *ras*. The *Apsaras* are adorned for the occasion and are ready for the festival of the *vanitas*.

Vanitas are the Svaminis of Braja who continually make *lila* with Krishna in the forests of Vrindavan. *Vanita* can also refer to those blessed practitioners who have lost all taste for shallow and worldly pleasures. They retire to the forest to contemplate upon Shri Krishna. They never return to anything except the nectar of Hari.

"For us Svaminis who are filled with love and renunciation, Krishna appears adorned. He is manifest and alive with the single intent of making a joyous congregation wherein the highest pursuits of life and divine engagement are enjoyed.

For the festive gathering
We are properly adorned.

"Those women who are not properly attired have squandered their youth and are like poor widows devoid of any true joy. The unique *lila* ornamentation is attained when lotus-like love and knowledge arises. Then *ras* is experienced everywhere."

Within and Throughout.

"Those *Apsaras* would seek out any means to meet with Krishna. To avoid delay, they headed in His direction as soon as they heard the sound of His flute. They longed for His proximity. Their yearning for Him was inherent and now arose again from simply hearing His call.

"The note of the flute filled their world with amazing melodies. From a single tone those celestial *devis* fell unconsious, unable to contain the force of Hari's loving flow. The unequalled and all-encompassing *ras*, the passionate mood.

"The conjugal mood is described in holy lore as the ultimate *ras*. It is the exalted state, the only true mood. It is the substratum of the true drama and without it, there is simply no taste. For this reason it is held in the highest esteem. As gold is the best metal to adorn the Great One, similarly the amorous mood is the supreme mood. Within its dimensions all other nectars are contained and without it, knowers of *ras* could never take delight.

"By seeing the *Apsara lila* we can now understand the significance of Krishna's amazing flute song. Those heavenly damsels who were deserving of worship in the end were not worthy enough to leave their heavenly vehicles to come to earth and have enjoyment with Hari. They could not contain His

loving mood for it was too divine for them. They lacked the necessary spiritual preparations.

The strongest sense of their bodies,
The mind-heart, was carried away,
Their wisdom destroyed by passion.

"Gods and goddesses never set foot on earth and Krishna would not go to their sphere to satisfy what appears to us to be simple hankering. The *Apsaras* lost all composure. Their spellbound infatuation spilled from their hearts into their god-realm, but not to Krishna. From above, flowers fell from their hair, from below, the knot of their inner garments became untied. All this revealed their disregard for worldly and heavenly rewards. Although goddesses never die nor tumble from heaven, Krishna's mesmerizing effect kept them from joining His play.

"Understand that whatever is not beneficial to Hari cannot produce a *ras* that is useful in His play. Any temperament that is not connected to Hari turns sour. Look at the real intention of the *Apsaras*. They were not even looking for Krishna when they came upon His call. They were out trying to find their husbands when they just happened to stumble upon Krishna. They first heard His flute and then were able to see Him. His unsurpassed beauty made them totally forget their husbands and their desires turned towards Him. Only then did they consider, "Let Krishna be our husband." Imagine, with such shallow designs they hankered after Him. That is why they will never find Him.

Our commitment to Hari
Is much worthier!"

The Svaminis continue their praise, this time focusing their attention on the blessed cows of Vrindavan.

13

The Cows

"The cows raise their ears
When they hear the sound of Shri Krishna's flute.
They imbibe the nectar
And milk flows from their udders.
Their calves, with mouthfuls of mother's milk
Stand stunned and even forget to swallow,
Their eyes well with tears,
Their souls touched by Govinda."
(Bhagavat 10/18/13)

SUBODHINI

The cows and the *Apsaras* all fell into swoons when they heard the call. Although the *Apsaras* were slightly more elevated than the cows, both had a common desire for liberation into Krishna.

"If you ask us, 'How could they have elevated ambitions? They were infatuated and attached to a reed flute!' We beg you to look further. They imbibed into their hearts:

A nectar song that emerged from Hari.
They were touched and transformed by His divinity.
It caused everything to cease.
They stood absolutely still, God-intoxicated.

"Although they were cows, they could still comprehend that the song came from the Beloved. They knew it was nectar and that it conferred immortality. When it entered their ears, a constant and flawless joy arose. It came from Hari's face, through the flute and made them forget everything but Him.

"We have explained to you before that the song of our beloved Hari is replete with lordship, potency, beauty, fame, knowledge and renunciation. The flute's call is like Hari, it is perfect. It is superb. We recognize the elixir and there is no other song that can compare and so:

The cows lifted up their ears to capture the nectar.
Their ears were renewed by its presence every second.
To capture the call, their ears became vessels for the nectar.
Now they cannot adjust to any other sound.

"The cow's ears have become sensitive only to the sound of *Brahman*. Their ears are like leaf cups that are used only once and then discarded. The reason for this is because their ears need

to be continually born and replenished to enable them to contain Hari's *ras* that is always exhilarating and expanding in ecstasy.

See the children of Braja, the young deer and calves.
They are overwhelmed by Krishna and now are unable
To even swallow their mouthfuls of mother's milk.

"They have been deeply touched by Govinda. The effect of His contact makes their eyes overflow with blissful tears. They see Hari within their hearts:

Govinda, the Lord of the cows
Master of the senses.
Now they are unaware
Of anything else.

"Their devotion does not stem from some vague feeling. They actually see Him. Hari has appeared to them in a way they can understand. We know it is true, we have witnessed their condition. The profound effect of Hari is upon them. Gopal the hero of the cows has removed their impurities by appearing to them within their hearts. The only reason why they could not clearly behold Him is because:

Their eyes are filled with tears
A banner of their devotion.

"If you think birds cannot hear Hari's flute because they do not have any knowledge or *satsang*, the holy association with bhaktas, we have observed something else. Listen."

14

The Birds

"O mother Yashoda, we have seen
Those birds of the Vrindavan forest.
We know they are enlightened sages.
They have seen Him, Shri Krishna,
And now they close their eyes
In deep meditation.
They are resting
In the arm-like branches of the Vrindavan trees
That are rich with foliage.
We witness their silence.
They are totally engaged in listening
To Hari's delightful song."
(Bhagavat 10/18/14)

SUBODHINI

The Svaminis here are speaking to Krishna's mother, Yashoda. They are all *nirguna*, that is, they are all beyond material qualities. That is perhaps why they are so open about their love for Krishna, even in front of His mother. In their worldly lives they are maid-servants who work in Yashoda's home. They are all unmarried and speak affectionately with Yashoda, the giver of glory. In olden times, wealth was often viewed in terms of jewels, cows, servants and beautiful young women.

Wealth was collected and gifted
To the Supreme Ruler.

These young virgins who work for mother Yashoda are very insightful. They have pious karma from previous births and know for certain that those Vrindavan birds were human sages. Now they wonder, "How did they become birds?" This thought distressed them until they considered:

Although they may be birds,
They have the honor of residing in Vrindavan,
The home of our Beloved.
They taste the Nectar of the call.

The Svaminis become enthralled when they carefully consider their fortune. They call Yashoda "mother" because she has given birth to Krishna. The Svaminis are refined and always see higher nature. They begin to reflect upon the nature of those birds, "They are naturally inclined towards meditation. That is how we know they are sages. Those birds are waiting for Krishna to appear.

They know He will; they know everything.

"They are seers, contemplative and patient. These birds are watching and waiting for Krishna to walk through their forest. They wait for the great opportunity in the protective arms of the noble Vrindavan woods, who are also considered to be high incarnations. From their elevated branches the winged ones will behold Hari only after relishing the call of His flute.

"When He fills the world of Vrindavan with song, the activities begin. The birds will listen carefully and then absorb the vision of Hari. Even after He has passed by them, these sages will not take flight.

They are firm in their vision.
And comprehend the nature of *ras*.
They know that to fly away would only
Spoil their experience of Hari.

"The bird sages remain focused on Him wherever He wanders. The *ras* produced by Krishna's flute is never deficient nor does it resonate like any worldly tone. It could never create any inner obstacles. These blessed birds know this and that is why they experience an uninterrupted rush of His nectar. Shri Krishna's flute produces sound that is unmanifested elixir. Its call is concealed, sweet and brings forth the experience of *ras*.

It is the sound of Brahman.
It is constant.

"By this sweet call Hari manifests the unmanifested *ras* for the benefit of others. Then He forms that nectar into a cognizable form.

"The birds have taken refuge in the Vrindavan woods like ancient sages once took the support of the different branches of Vedic wisdom. They rest upon their boughs and have no fear of falling nor any apprehension concerning death.

Even when Krishna wanders far away
They simply close their eyes to the world
And contemplate Him within their hearts.

"Their speech is totally controlled. They speak of nothing besides Krishna. They are firmly established in *bhava*. If they were to speak to each other while Hari was playing, their ability to hear God would be obstructed. Then their *bhava* for Him would be adversely affected and their words would all be wasted.

"All of this confirms in our minds that these blessed birds are experiencing the *ras* of our beloved Hari within their hearts. Through them we are able to grasp that the flute's call is divine and extremely rare. Otherwise, those sages who became the Vrindavan birds would not be so enraptured by the song. Now they can think of nothing else!

"It is often thought that birds stay in trees with lovely thick foliage to avoid the hunter's arrows. We see them resting in mango and other trees that have tender and beautiful leaves:

So they will not be distracted
By those beautiful leaves
They close their eyes for meditation.

"They close their mouths so they will not be tempted to nibble on the tender leaves. It also stops them from chirping. Birds such as parrots have a habit of chattering. Any discussion at this point would only obstruct their encounter of Hari's magic."

Now the Svaminis will reveal to us what happened to the rivers, streams and springs of Vrindavan upon hearing the call of Shri Krishna's flute.

15

The Waters

"When the rivers and waters of Vrindavan
Heard Mukunda's call,
Their arising desires were ebbed
And came to a halt.
Then, in appreciation they offered Him
Their finest lotuses.
Now Hari has come before them
And allows the waters
To embrace His lotus feet
With their lapping hands."
(Bhagavat 10/18/15)

SUBODHINI

When the rivers and springs observed the birds of Vrindavan they all considered,

By just listening to Hari's call
Those birds have come to know God's essence.
We could become just like them
Totally enlightened, spiritually accomplished.

"It was at that point that these bodies of water decided to take the teachings of those sagious birds to heart. They began to listen carefully to the flute, that famous call of Hari that freely grants liberation. Then their ebbing currents, all signs of their rising passions and swoons of separation came to a complete standstill.

It is the natural dharma for rivers and springs to flow,
But in Vrindavan things are very different.
The profound desires of the waters' hearts
Are filled with wisdom and discrimination.

"We can easily understand how Hari can bring sentient beings to a sudden standstill with His spellbinding presence, but what is amazing here is that He has cast His charm

Upon insentient flowing bodies of water.
The halting of those springs and rivers
Was not due to weakness or formula.
They stopped to only meet with Hari.

"Krishna became still to accept their embrace. He came right before them so that the rivers and other noble waters of

Vrindavan could bring to Him their highest offerings, their lotus flowers. The water's waves became hands and caressed His feet.

Their dedicated lotus hearts have also
Taken firm hold of His feet.

"Those rivers are goddesses; they are respected divinities and are worshiped by many. Now they have no other desire aside from Hari. They are focused on Krishna's *lila* and He made Himself available for their embrace.

"Our Krishna has been connected to water before. That is why He is sometimes called Murari. He received that name when He killed the demon Mura who lived in the water. By doing so, He removed the impurities and ignorance of the waters. Now with the touch of His lotus feet, He enlightens the Vrindavan waters. Mukunda, the Gifter of Liberation brings them from

Unconsciousness to awareness,
From ignorance to wisdom.
Krishna has made water feel.

16

The Cloud

"Now we will speak of an exceptional cloud
Who sees Balaram, the cowlads
And her friend Krishna herding cows and
Playing the flute
Under the hot sun in Vrindavan.

That Cloud
Becomes filled with love and
Shades Hari with her expansive form.
She then cools Vrindavan
With showers of flowers."
(Bhagavat 10/18/16)

SUBODHINI

"It is autumn and the intense sun beats down upon Hari and His friends, His protectors. Krishna is Gopal, the protector of cows. They are all used to the shade. Krishna is also accompanied by His older brother Balaram who increases the love of the participants. Krishna is surrounded:

By the gods.
The divinities are His associates
Appearing for this special occasion in cowlad forms.
Shri Krishna is always accompanied by dharma.

"When Hari sounds His flute, He awakens all the divinities of Braja. He is playing with all of His potencies, blissfully making exchange with His *lila*-partners and lovers. Shade is required for this activity and this is the role of that special cloud.

She loves Hari and has perfected her devotion
To such an extent that she is God's friend.

"She understands what is required of the situation and expands herself to provide adequate shade for the *lila* taking place beneath her. It was the love she felt for Shri Krishna that elated her and made her expand.

As her love increased, so did her form.
It was all for the pleasure of Hari.

"As an act of selfless friendship, this cloud rose to the exalted position of being able to offer her very essence to Him; she showered flowers upon Him, an act of supreme refuge. It is said that,

Flowers are the nectar of clouds.

"As she showered her flowers, this cloud went from being Hari's friend, the eighth level of devotion to offering her very Self to Him, the nineth devotion.

The Cloud was first moved by love
That increased when she heard His glories
And then matured into a fast friendship.

It was love that inspired her to take her form.

"Clouds are considered to be the forms of desire and can take on any shape at will. It was because of her great affection and the nature of Hari's play that she expanded and shaded all the *lila*-players. She was not at all troubled by her efforts, but rather enthralled.

"One who is born and can develop and cultivate devotion to God attains *atmanivedanam*, the blessed state of Soulful Dedication. That cloud perfected *atmanivedanam*. "Some compare that cloud to Krishna since she is:

Charitable like Hari.
She also shares His hue and
Like Him, nourishes and helps create life
With her nourishing waters.

"Those who share similar qualities are generally friends. This cloud excels even in friendship. She has given everything she owns to Krishna. Her nectar essence of flowers is freely offered to Hari, an act of selfless love.

"This all indicates that she is playing with Krishna as if she is Laxshmi herself. More on that intimate *lila* when we praise Hari's forest women, the Pulindis.

The cowlads herd the cows,
Balaram protects the quarters

While Krishna's flute awakens Vrindavan.
Then there is dalliance in God's playground.

"This Cloud is a true friend like the serpant god Shesh who once sheltered Shri Krishna with his thousand hoods."

Now the Svaminis speak of the low caste tribal women, the forest dwelling Pulindis.

17

The Pulindis

"The Pulindi tribal women of the forest
Were overwhelmed with passion
For Shri Krishna, Who is also called
Urugaya.

To quell their pain of separation
They used "kum kum",
The red powder,
That graces Shri Laxshmi's breasts.

From Krishna's lotus feet it
Found its way into the Vrindavan grass.
From there the Pulindis collected it
And applied it onto their faces and breasts.

By connecting in this way
With Beloved Hari,
These tribal women
Became perfected."

(Bhagavat 10/18/17)

SUBODHINI

"The Pulindis, the forest tribal women who live by the Govardhan Hill, abide close to our Beloved. Their growing *bhakti* makes them exalted. They are peerless and have a direct connection to Shri Krishna's lotus feet.

"Shri Krishna is respected and replete, the conclusion of the scriptures and praised by His bhaktas. His lotus feet are adorned by Shri Laxshmi, the Splendor-Goddess. It was after deep reflection that Shri Lakshmi chose Hari. She then prepared the red *kum kum* powder and applied it with great devotion to Krishna's lotus feet."

And in the love play that followed
The Couples' special positions
Allowed the love powder
To find its way to Laxshmi's breasts.

The *kum kum* is a lila-substance
Filled with divine energy.
It now graces Laxshmi's breasts
And enters Her heart.

"When Krishna walked on the Vrindavan grass, the *kum kum* on His feet formed impressions that looked like alligators, a creature reknown for potency. Somehow some *kum kum* found its way to Hari's hands, but was again dropped at His feet. Then, when Krishna wandered the Vrindavan abode, some of the *kum kum* came to embellish the grass. When the Pulindis saw the graced powder, they instantly realized Laxshmi's pleasures with Hari.

They saw the *lila*,
The love plays.

"It was at that point that Krishna's dalliance became known to them and it made their passions arise. To quell the rise of their divine desires they spread the blessed substance, the *lila* love-powder, all over their faces and breasts in an attempt to regain some composure.

"By simply applying the powder, Shri Laxshmi entered them and they became worthy. They could now be enjoyed by Hari, their pains of separation relieved in the encounter.

In this amazing manner the Pulindis were perfected.

"What we relate to you here is a divine description of Hari's play of transcendence. Krishna is called "Urugaya" because the Pulindis heard of Him and then praised Him from their hearts. When compared to these tribal women living deep in the forest, We are inferior."

Desire can be a source of agony to the heart.

The *nirguna* Svaminis now speak amongst themselves.

18

Govardhan

"O friends, how sad it is that Hari
Does not even touch us
The way He does the Govardhan Hill.

When Ram and Krishna wander
About the mount,
That king of peaks becomes totally enraptured
And affords the Divine Brothers
And Their herds of cows
Water, grass, caves and roots.

Of all bhaktas, we consider
Govardhan to be the best."
(Bhagavata 10/18/18)

SUBODHINI

"If you wonder how the Pulindis became so devotionally exalted, it was due to their association with that great bhakta, the Govardhan Hill. How distressing that we also live near the sacred hill, yet are not blessed with their experiences of Shri Krishna. Truly, among all of Hari's followers, we count the Govardhan Hill as the foremost. We have good reason:

Most mountains are unconscious but
Govardhan has been thrilled with the touch
Of Ram and Krishna as They herd Their cows.

"We know that *bhakti* practitioners are real accomplished saints. When touched by devotion once, they remain in a continual state of bliss. They are like the Govardhan Hill.

Govardhan is pure
Govardhan is *nirguna*
Full of non-worldly virtues.

"Although penniless, the Hill offers the cows, the cowlad gods, as well as Ram and Krishna water, grass, caves and roots. The Govardhan Hill is a fine host to its *lila* guests. Four items of hospitality never leave the saint's abode:

A grass mat to sit on:
A place on earth to entertain.
Water to refresh the guest.
And sweet speech, pleasing to the mind.

"See how the Govardhan Hill maintains those four traditions. On its slopes there is ample grass for comfortable

seating and food for herding cows. The hill's springs disperse fresh water. For earth Govardhan provides caves that shelter everyone from elements like rain.

"Since the hill cannot speak, it offers roots. Some are eaten raw, the others beg to be cooked. Sweet speech and food are both subjects of the mouth. The Govardhan hill offers various edibles and presents Krishna and His friends a total meal. Govardhan is the foremost of all bhaktas and is always content and provides comfort to others.

"Compared to such a great devotee as the Govardhan Hill, we appear to be truly lacking. We are unable to even approach that sacred mount, never mind to find and collect any roots for our Beloved there. We cannot offer a single *ras*. We are frustrated and visibly agitated like when Krishna stole and ate our precious butter. But what can we do? We are not as capable as those Pulindi tribal women we mentioned earlier. They are inspired by the Govardhan hill and please Krishna by offering Him collections of edible roots all gathered from that divine hill.

"We are similar in form to our Beloved Hari. But why does He always choose to grace rocks and others who are not even His own kind while He astutely avoids us?"

19

Krishna

"O friend
It is all so amazing
The way Krishna and Balaram
Move from forest to forest
With their cows and cowlads.

When They play Their benevolent sweet flutes
It creates complete immobility in
Otherwise moving conscious entities while
In trees and other insentient ones
He brings forth consciousness.

Now those embodied beings
Are thrilled by Krishna,
Who adorns Himself with a rope
For binding cows
At milking time."

SUBODHINI

"Our Hari is totally contrary to anything we have seen in the world. It is the nature of His *lila*. Although He actually does nothing, the cows and others capable of motion are amazed by His presence. They are spellbound; all their movements have come to a halt. Hari not only affects the mobile ones, but even touches those who are confined to a single place their entire lives.

The trees are aware of Hari's presence.
It makes them spontaneously bloom,
They have become thrilled and ooze sweet sap.

"We are amazed and know that we are also meritorious of receiving Hari's nectar, yet somehow have been deemed unworthy by Him. This is why Shri Krishna does not bless us with His nectar while those tribal women, who should be considered unworthy, Hari made deserving and awarded them His nectar-association.

"Hari's movement through the forest with His cows and cowlads, the melodious song of the flutes and the touch of His lotus feet upon the ground purified the cows and godly cowlads and everything in the forest. Vrindavan is now free of contradiction. This is due to the pervasive presence of

Krishna's dharma.
His exalted presence has covered Vrindavan
And puts everyone and everything
Into a devotional *samadhi*.

"That noble flute, the creator of the wonderful song, enjoys Krishna's nectar. What it cannot contain it passes on to the trees.

They stand enraptured. Shri Krishna makes conscious beings inanimate and insentient beings conscious."

"When there is victory over the base nature, then the individual becomes a part of the *lila* and can experience Shri Krishna. Only then is there a comprehension and taste of *ras*. By Krishna's contact, the godly cowlads attained *lila*-powers. That is why they are called *rasikas*.

Rasikas savor lila.
Their presence contributes
To the purification of the forest.

"When Hari and the cows return to the cow pen in Gokul in the late afternoon, His forest-wandering cows see that Krishna is ready to milk them. The cows are all pleased and stand prepared to pour forth their nectar for Him without any complications. Krishna's approach is slow and silent, very sweet. Nothing should disturb the cows at milking time. There should be peace when nectar flows. We call out to our fellow bhaktas because we have all come to the cow pen to see and meet with Hari.

To end the day of separation.

"We are of one mind and are all In Love with Hari. We see the most wonderful condition of Vrindavan's conscious and unconscious entities. Now Krishna has a rope in His hand. It is used to restrain the cows. He ties their legs so He can easily milk them. When the trees and other steadfast growth see Hari with that rope they consider, 'He will also bind us'.

In the dismay and excitement of the moment
They exude nectar."

Now the sage Shri Sukadeva concludes the flute calling *lila*. It is the last portion of the *prameya lila* wherein the Svaminis of Braja, having realized that Krishna is God, now refine that

realization by understanding that Krishna is their eternal Lord and Husband. Now they will explore different means to realize that relationship within the world. Before these chapters are revealed, Sukadeva tells the attentive king about the result of the Svamini's praise of the flute.

20

Perfect Attachment

"O king, you have listened
To the song of Krishna's flute.
You have heard how the Svaminis sang
To each other-
About Hari's uninhibited Vrindavan play
And became totally absorbed into His lila."

SUBODHINI

Good King, what you have heard is a description of a single *lila*. Know that Krishna's plays are unlimited and that is why He is called Bhagavan, the holder of the six virtues."

When the divine attributes mingle,
There is infinite expansion of liberated *lilas*.
Krishna can never be contained by any law
Because by nature He is unlimited.

The Svaminis are now familiar with Him and express to each other the nature of His inner *lila* and how it is an unrestrained love-play. They have entered into the realm of Hari's glories and are totally absorbed, unaware of anything else except for Shri Krishna's *lila*. They only see His Play, whether they are asleep or awake.

Their attachment and one-pointedness can be compared to an insect that is trapped in a crevice. Outside a hungry black bee awaits, ready to devour the insect. The insect is terrified and thinks of nothing besides the black bee. The insect's meditation on the black bee is so overwhelming that-

The insect is transformed
Into a black bee!

In a similar way, the Svaminis are so engrossed in Hari's *lila* that they became the *lila*, that is, a part of it. No other consciousness remains and this process has liberated them. They have forgotten *samsara* and now only remember God. They are freed from the cycles of coming and going. Their attachment to Hari is firm and they are totally forgetful of everything else.

This chapter divulges how Hari revealed His *ras* nature to

the Svaminis of Braja and in doing so, they became continuously conscious of God. Their attainment is to be emulated.

The poet Padmanabha reflects,

His flute filled the forest of Vrindavan
With a divine song.
It touched the clouds
And put the greatest Yogis
Into a deep samadhi.

The sound of Brahman has arisen
And fills Vrindavan with perfect joy...

Padmanabha sings,
"Then it was the sound of Shri Krishna's flute.
Now it is the words of Shri Vallabhacharya."

श्रीवेणु-गीत

श्रीशुक उवाच
इत्थं शरत्स्वच्छजलं पद्माकरसुगन्धिना।
न्यविशद् वायुना वातं सगोगोपालकोऽच्युतः।१।
कुसुमितवनराजिशुष्मिभृंगद्विजकुलघुष्टसरःसरिन्महीध्रम्।
मधुपतिरवगाह्य चारयन् गाः सहपशुपालबलश्चुकूज वेणुम्।२।
तद् व्रजस्त्रिय आश्रुत्य वेणुगीतं स्मरोदयम्।
काश्चित् परोक्षं कृष्णस्य स्वसखीभ्योऽन्ववर्णयन्।३।
तद् वर्णयिमुमारब्धाः स्मरन्त्यः कृष्णचेष्टितम्।
नाशकन् स्मरवेगेन विक्षिप्तमनसो नृप।४।
बर्हापीडं नटवरवपुः कर्णयोः कर्णिकारं
बिभ्रद् वासः कनककपिशं वैजयन्तीं च मालाम्।
रन्ध्रान् वेणोरधरसुधया पूरयन् गोपवृन्दै–
र्वृन्दारण्यं स्वपदरमणं प्राविशद् गीतकीर्तिः।५।
इति वेणुरवं राजन् सर्वभूतमनोहरम्।
श्रुत्वा व्रजस्त्रियः सर्वा वर्णयन्त्योऽभिरेभिरे।६।
गोप्य ऊचुः
अक्षण्वतां फलमिदं न परं विदामः सख्यः पशूननु विवेशयतोर्वयस्यैः।
वक्त्रं व्रजेशसुतयोरनुवेणु जुष्टं यैर्वा निपीतमनुरक्तकटाक्षमोक्षम्।७।
चूतप्रवालबर्हस्तबकोत्पलाब्जमालानुपृक्तपरिधानविचित्रवेषौ।
मध्ये विरेजतुरलं पशुपालगोष्ठ्यां रंगे यथा नटवरौ क्व च गायमानौ।८।
गोप्यः किमाचरदयं कुशलं स्म वेणुर्दामोदराधरसुधामपि गोपिकानाम्।
भुङ्क्ते स्वयं यदवशिष्टरसं ह्रदिन्यो ह्रष्यत्त्वचोऽश्रुमुमुचुस्तरवो यथाऽऽर्याः।९।

वृन्दावनं सखि भुवो वितनोति कीर्तिं यद् देवकीसुतपदाम्बुजलब्धलक्ष्मि।
गोविन्दवेणुमनुमत्तमयूरनृत्यं प्रेक्ष्याद्रिसान्वपरतान्यसमस्तसत्त्वम् ।१०।
धन्याः स्म मूढमतयोऽपि हरिण्य एता या नन्दनन्दनमुपात्तविचित्रवेषम्।
आकर्ण्य वेणुरणितं सहकृष्णसाराः पूजां दधुर्विरचितां प्रणयावलोकैः ।११।
कृष्णं निरीक्ष्य वनितोत्सवरूपशीलं श्रुत्वा च तत्क्वणितवेणुविचित्रगीतम्।
देव्यो विमानगतयः स्मरनुन्नसारा भ्रश्यत्प्रसूनकबरा मुमुहुर्विनीव्यः ।१२।
गावश्च कृष्णमुखनिर्गतवेणुगीतपीयूषमुत्तभितकर्णपुटैः पिबन्त्यः।
शावाः स्नुतस्तनपयःकवलाः स्म तस्थुर्गोविन्दमात्मनि दृशाश्रुकलाः स्पृशन्त्यः ।१३।
प्रायो बताम्ब विहगा मुनयो वनेऽस्मिन् कृष्णेक्षितं तदुदितं कलवेणुगीतं।
आरुह्य ये द्रुमभुजान् रुचिरप्रवालान् शृण्वन्त्यमीलितदृशो विगतान्यवाचः ।१४।
नद्यस्तदा तदुपधार्य मुकुन्दगीतमावर्तलक्षितमनोभवभग्नवेगाः।
आलिंगनस्थगितमूर्मिभुजैर्मुरारेर्गृह्णन्ति पादयुगलं कमलोपहाराः ।१५।
दृष्ट्वाऽऽतपे व्रजपशून् सह रामगोपैः सञ्चारयन्तमनुवेणुमुदीरयन्तम्।
प्रेमप्रवृद्ध उदितः कुसुमावलीभिः सख्युर्व्यधात् स्ववपुषाम्बुद आतपत्रम् ।१६।
पूर्णाः पुलिन्द्य उरुगायपदाब्जरागश्रीकुंकुमेन दयितास्तनमण्डितेन।
तद्दर्शनस्मररुजस्तृणरूषितेन लिम्पन्त्य आननकुचेषु जहुस्तदाधिम् ।१७।
हन्तायमद्रिरबला हरिदासवर्यो यद् रामकृष्णचरणस्पर्शप्रमोदः।
मानं तनोति सहगोगणयोस्तयोर्यत् पानीयसूयवसकन्दरकन्दमूलैः ।१८।
गा गोपकैरनुवनं नयतोरुदारवेणुस्वनैः कलपदैस्तनुभृत्सु सख्यः।
अस्पन्दनं गतिमतां पुलकस्तरूणां निर्योगपाशकृतलक्षणयोर्विचित्रम् ।१९।
एवंविधा भगवतो या वृन्दावनचारिणः।
वर्णयन्त्यो मिथो गोप्यः क्रीडास्तन्मयतां ययुः ।२०।

इति श्रीमद्भागवते महापुराणे पारमहंस्यां संहितायां दशमस्कन्धे पूर्वार्धे
वेणुगीतं नाम अष्टादशोऽध्यायः ।१८।